MEDEA UNMASKED: INNOKENTII ANNENSKII’S PROTO-FEMINIST TRANSLATION OF EURIPIDES’ MEDEA

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Jason K. Brooks

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The dissertation of Jason K. Brooks was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Adrian Wanner
Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Comparative Literature
Dissertation Adviser
Chair of Committee

Thomas O. Beebee
Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Comparative Literature and German

Michael M. Naydan
Woskob Family Professor of Ukrainian Studies, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Zoe Stamatopoulou
Tombros Early Career Professor of Classical Studies and Assistant Professor of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies

Eric Hayot
Head, Department of Comparative Literature
Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature and Asian Studies

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
Abstract

Scholars have long studied Innokentii Annenskii, the famous but enigmatic Russian Silver Age poet, philologist, and pedagogue. There are monographs, articles, and chapters devoted to Annenskii; there is no paucity of scholarly comment on his contribution to Russian modernism. There remains a striking lacuna in the literature, however, when it comes to his life’s work: his translation of the complete Euripides. 

Medea Unmasked: Innokentii Annenskii’s Proto-Feminist Translation of Euripides’ Medea is the first sustained examination of Innokentii Annenskii’s Euripidea, and the only study to date to evaluate systematically his classical translation as something more than a curiosity in his larger poetic corpus. This dissertation, then, argues that in translating Euripides’ Medea, Annenskii brought his two worlds—poetry and scholarship—together, resulting in an early feminist reading of the play, a reading we might call avant-garde. Annenskii’s provides a reading on the cutting edge for its time. With the foundation laid in this dissertation, it becomes clear that Slavists need to reassess Annenskii’s legacy in a more thorough way to include his translation work as a significant part of his oeuvre. Beyond Russian literature, however, this thesis has broader applications to literary and classical studies. Grounding his efforts in perceptive philological analysis, Annenskii produces a deeply interpretive translation, one that prefigures many late-twentieth century readings of Euripides’ play; thus a fresh consideration of various poets’ translations may provide new insight into many literary lights that we think we understand so well, but whose corpora scholars have not given a full consideration.
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Professor Paul B. Harvey, Jr. Professor Harvey was my mentor. He taught me about effective teaching and Roman curiosities; he showed me where to eat in The Eternal City and how to sip Campari. He modeled for all of us how to be a rigorous yet compassionate academic. He is missed.
Chapter 1

Translation, and this is no new statement, is a process of choosing. The sojourn from source to target, in fact, can be seen as a cartographic one, where every choice made by the translator plots as one more coordinate helping us to locate where in the act, where in the textual network, and where in the final product the translator sits. Mapping where the translator is in a text is more than an academic exercise, fodder for literary theory and criticism, for, in turn, the translator’s position raises questions of purpose and audience. The matrix of choice primarily solves these questions: is the translation meant to introduce a foreign author to a native readership? Is the translation meant to be a crib for language and literature students? Is the translation mainly interpretive or is it a faithful transference from one language to another? Occasionally, a translation transcends itself and enters the textual network of the source text in a unique way. When this happens, the translation becomes a literary intertext, entering a cultural exchange in much more than a perfunctory fashion. This is not to say that stellar translations always spark such intertextual moments. Indeed, some very fine translations hope to stay as mute as possible, genuflecting to the primacy of the original, acting more as a highlight to the source rather than standing as a literary monument on its own. But still others become inseparable from the discussion of the source text, or, rather, they define the source for the target language and culture. In a way, translations that occupy significant space in the textual network of the source text, unite source-writers and target-translators, and those translations deserve careful consideration as part of a source text’s afterlife. But this is rarely done.
There is a shortcoming in literary scholarship that translation is not often studied as part of a poet’s work. Translation, in this regard, should not be confused with imitation. Catullus’ following of Sappho, or Lowell’s varied imitations, should not be read as translations per se. Inspired by a literary precedent, these poets, using text as pretext, look to recreate a text for their time and culture; they cling fastidiously to felicity with less concern for fidelity. Unlike imitation, literary translation is precisely the precarious balance between fidelity and felicity. Imitation is, at root, a genre apart from translation, and close studies of imitations, though they may require some mastery of the original’s language and literary polish, do not often involve reading the imitations as translations in a strict sense.

Translation studies, for its part, has traditionally concerned itself with the theoretical issues that arise in the act of translation, looking at how much foreignness should be preserved, to what extent a translator should adhere to the source’s meter, its rhyme scheme, its word games, whether it is even possible to “translate.” Register, historical or literary reference, dialect, interrogation of convention, and many other problems concern the scholar of translation. While these not uncommon foci of analysis in literary criticism either, scholars have yet to explore the full blending of translation studies and comparative literary studies to its full potential. Certainly scholars such as Russell West, Adrian Wanner, Harold de Campos, and others, have produced valuable interdisciplinary studies that consider translation as a function of literary studies, but these are exceptional and not theoretically of a piece. Being critically heterogeneous is not a problem, naturally, but our goal here is to reorient translations by poets as more than an exercise or supplemental expression of poetic juice; we want to read such
translations as key texts within a poet’s corpus, texts that not only help us discuss a poet’s aesthetic project, but that can actually redefine a poet’s legacy, that can help fill holes in our understanding of a poet’s place in the larger cultural context.

**Translators, Poets, and Intertextuality**

Certainly many translation theorists have addressed the issue of translation as a creative, even procreative, process. Yves Bonnefoy takes up translation as a rewriting, for if a translation

[is] an enquiry and an experiment, it can only inscribe itself—write itself—in the course of a life; it will draw upon that life in all its aspects, as its actions. This does not mean that the translator need be in other respects a ‘poet.’ But it definitely implies that if he is himself a writer he will be unable to keep his translating separate from his own work. (189)

But Bonnefoy is most specifically concerned with understanding translation feedback into his own poetry and not so much concerned with translation with a view to further defining one’s poetic voice, or finding the role of translations in the reception of a poet. So while he recognizes the generative quality of translation, he does not bring it to where we want to go here. Similarly, Walter Benjamin seems a bit more generous but he stops short of admitting a translation’s intertextual role(s) by necessarily subordinating it to the original; he does this not necessarily as a quality judgment but rather insofar as a translation cannot, in his view, exist as anything other than a translation: “for a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life” (73). Benjamin recognizes the ability of a translation to change and
influence the target language (75), but still he does not wish to mingle translators with poets, or, better, translations with poems, offering, “as translation is a mode of its own, the task of the translator, too, may be regarded as distinct and clearly differentiated from the task of the poet” (77). In this way, even if a brilliant poet undertakes translation, scholars generally subordinate those efforts to the poet’s poetic output. The present study looks to restore systematically a poet’s translation work into the heart of his poetic textual network and into the larger textual network of the original. Once translation finds its proper place in the critical appraisal of a poet’s oeuvre, the place of that poet can be more accurately found.

We have several times now used the term “intertextual” and implied a relationship between intertextuality and translation. We must therefore briefly look at the loaded theoretical term, “intertextuality.” We then must situate this concept within translation studies and the current project. Although the term has become as polysemic as any in literary criticism, “intertextuality” has an identifiable kernel: pared down to its core, intertextuality posits that no text exists or flourishes outside of the nexus of all other texts that precede it, and of all that will follow. Beyond this most basic concept, intertextuality has grown in many directions. Critics from Barthes to Bloom have used intertextual theory to further their critical projects, and the term has come to mean about as many things as there are scholars who use it. In Renate Lachmann’s estimation, “the concept of intertextuality has taken on irritating dimensions—its concepts branching out, its terminology proliferating wildly” (391); but we must concede that the term’s polyvalence

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1 For a useful history of intertextuality, see Allen, Grahm. Intertextuality. New York: Routledge, 2002. For a critical study of how intertextuality has been most effectively used and by whom, see Bernardelli, Andrea. “The Concept of Intertextuality Thirty Years On: 1967-1997.” Versus, 77-78 (1997), 3-22. Bernardelli is particularly useful for the way he classifies the major currents in intertextual theory. Allen provides a thorough history of intertextuality, its antecedents, and its major voices from Kristeva forward.
is a central element of its own existence. In Bernardelli’s view, given that basic kernel of intertextuality, “it was inevitable that a different range of definitions of intertextuality would be coined” (3). Indeed, a more intriguing question than, “what is intertextuality?” is surely, “what are its limits?” That is a question for another place than this, perhaps, but the present project would be happy to push the frontier of intertextuality into a new and open space.

To understand the connection between intertextuality and translation, it is useful to turn to Julia Kristeva and her conception of the three dimensions of the text. In her seminal, 1967 essay, “Word, Dialogue, and Novel,” Kristeva not only introduced the term “intertextuality,” but she also opened the important work of Bakhtin to western readers. In so doing, Kristeva builds on the Bakhtinian concepts of dialogue and ambivalence (specifically as these ideas relate to the novel) arguing for an intersection of language and space. She sets forward her notion of the three dimensions of textual space thus:

[the] three dimensions or coordinates of dialogue are writing subject, addressee, and exterior texts. The word’s status is thus defined horizontally (the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as well as vertically (the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus). (36-7)

The point at which the word or text intersects on the horizontal and vertical axes is the point of the text’s true creation, and thus the text can only exist as an intertext as plotted in the field defined by the axes in question. More simply, a poetic text is strictly in fieri until that intersected point is performed (read), at which time the text is recreated by the moment (which determines the y-axis’ population of “anterior” texts, and the x-axis, which is drawn by the skill of the given addressee to engage in this multi-dimensional
textual space). Thus, we must conclude that all literary texts, which all populate the vertical axis, profoundly, constantly, and continuously interact with each other, not just synchronically, but in real time: all texts exist as a result of and in relation to other texts.

Echoes of this three dimensional space as the locus of textual birth reverberate through Barthes: “we know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writing, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture” (122). We introduce Barthes into this discussion because his idea of blending and clashing writings all taking place simultaneously in a text helps to make more salient the kinesis of Kristeva’s axes. Further, Barthes’ notion helps to establish the translator’s ability to plot the text’s point of reception within the Kristevan three-dimensional field. Finally, Barthes allows us to situate a translation alongside an original and within a translator’s larger corpus in a meaningful way.

Also conceiving of the text spatially, though in a slightly different way, Yuri Lotman argues that “language provides a formal system of expression, but the field of content remains, from the point of view of language as such, extremely free” (34). In this way, we must understand the text not only as a spatial object, but also as an object given to semantic play. It is Lotman, in fact, who goes to great pains, in his Universe of the Mind, to orient the text as a semiotic object—that is, an object that accomplishes the following:

1. the transmission of available information (that is, of texts);
2. the creation of new information, that is, of texts which are not simply deducible according to set algorithms
from already existing information, but which are to some degree unpredictable;
3. memory, that is, the capacity to preserve and reproduce information (texts). (2)

In Lotman’s terms, a text is labeled an “intelligence” or “semiotic object.” This is important because his theory of the semiotics of culture hinges in many ways on the fact that, “for an intelligence to function there must be another intelligence” (2). Put another way, for a text to function, there must be another text, or, more realistically, a network of texts that informs, delimits, and engages that text. The network of texts, the intertexts, though Lotman does not use the term, shapes the “code,” the means of deciphering, used by a reader to receive the transmission of information from Text$^1$ in the process of creating Text$^2$. This is not unlike the clashing and blending writings in Barthes. This process of transmission through a code is important for our purposes because it so heavily informs the task of translation, a task that is marked by its own plurality of space. Translation, in Lotman’s estimation, exemplifies the “intelligence” of a text.

Specifically, the transmission of information (T$^1$) once run through a code (C) creates a new text (T$^2$). Complicating the transmission, of course, in a most Barthesian way, is the multiplicity of codes—the possibility of infinite codes by which to process T$^1$, and where each code “is a complex hierarchical construction capable of generating a set of texts in equal degree corresponding to it” (Lotman, 14). To distill this, processing T$^1$ is a matter of passing it through a code, of which there is an infinite number, and creating a new text (T$^2$). Just as there are infinite codes (C$^1$, C$^2$, C$^3$…C$^n$), so there is infinite potential for the resulting text (T$^2$, T$^3$…T$^n$) (Lotman).

The plurality of codes in Lotman shows that the function of choice in translation is infinite and ultimately dispositive of the target text. In this way, identifying a
translator’s code sheds important light both on the translator and the resultant text. For example, a feminist code will produce a T² different from a steampunk code. Identifying (C) is thus an important step in establishing where a translation fits into the translator’s larger project, and in delineating how the poet fits into, say, a literary movement.

**Innokentii Annenskii’s Vanguard**

What follows is an exploration into Innokentii Annenskii’s translation of Euripides *Medea* (1903). Innokentii Annenskii is a major but enigmatic figure in Russian Modernism, leaving behind a small but impactful body of work that has eluded scholars in various ways for generations. In addition to his poetic output, Annenskii was a classical scholar of note, and he made immense contributions not only to Russian Silver Age poetry, but also late-19th and early-20th century pedagogy, classical studies, and the intellectual climate of Saint Petersburg in the first decade of the 20th century. Our concern here is to demonstrate how the importance of his translation work, specifically on Euripides’ *Medea*, helps clarify his place in the Silver Age.

In his translation, Innokentii Annenskii converges his two worlds—poetry and academia—to produce an avant-garde, pre-feminist reading of Euripides’ *Medea*, a reading far ahead of its time. This befits the man whose own poetry was not fully appreciated until the generation of poets who succeeded him, the Acmeists. Annenksii was a sensitive and skilled reader whose translations often show that he was well tapped into his source texts. When it came to the *Medea*, however, Annenskii simply faced a theoretical, or, better, a critical handicap. He clearly saw what was at work in the *Medea*, but he lacked the full bag of tools to explore the issue academically or in the way that we
can today. Theoretical concepts of gender, for example, or certain readings of the ancient Greek stage have only come to the critic in the last generation or so. We thus cannot expect Annenskii to be so philologically avant-garde as to discuss such ideas. Examining his translation, however, we see a clear effort on his part to highlight thematically the very issues within the Medea that this study proposes using Annenskii and more modern philological inquiry. In 2006, J. Michael Walton isolated simply what he believes is the crux of translating Euripides’ masterpiece: “Medea may come down to the partitioning of sympathies between the wronged wife and the obtuse husband” (135). In 1903, Annenskii seemed to understand this already, but his translation reveals a much stronger sympathy for Medea, for he sees that her plight is borne out of a much more complex situation than a simple betrayal; Annenskii portrays his Medea as responding to a constellation of oppression in the misogynistic and xenophobic Greek system. Such a reading of Medea on the part of Annenskii demonstrates, though, just how ahead of his time was both his reading of the Medea, and his place in Russian belles-lettres.

Myth and Medea

For the student of Greek mythology, it is easy to get lost in the huge personalities, the adventures of a given hero, or the treachery of a certain villain. The myopic understanding of much ancient myth is no doubt a result of the focus that many mythological texts bring to individuals: The Odyssey is Odysseus’; the Agamemnon seems to belong to the soon-to-fall king; The Aeneid cannot be understood apart from Rome’s ancestor. It is easy to think that these texts focus on the protagonists only. We forget, perhaps, that Telemachus shines, Clytemnestra looms, and that Dido, Anchises, and Turnus are all central to Rome’s rise, which itself requires Troy’s fall. That is, all of
these characters are links in the same chain, for no character in ancient myth exists in a vacuum or on his or her own. The whole body of Greek myth is one connected, continuous, if circuitous, narrative. This narrative chain gets complicated, though: ancient mythographers innovate, expand, and truncate myths for their ends. Such changes enter into a larger narrative matrix of a given mythological thread and, often, to understand a myth well, one must have at least some familiarity with its variants.

The case of Medea and her mythology is an excellent example of mythographer innovation and of the ways in which a larger understanding of her story textures and complicates her mythology. Just as we tend to look to The Odyssey to find out about Odysseus, we typically look to Euripides to learn about Medea. This is fine, but it is incomplete. There is much to discover about Odysseus in The Iliad, in the Ajax, and in the Aeneid. Similarly, if we ignore the larger development of Medea’s character apart from Euripides’ iconic portrayal, we will not approach her correctly in our assessment of her motivation, her actions, her importance. We all know Medea as the woman scorned, the woman who kills her own children out of revenge against her unfaithful husband. But this is a narrow understanding of Medea and thus of the story that Euripides himself wished to tell.

In ancient Greece, the full mythological picture was well established, and Greeks would have been exposed to Medea’s story and its variations from a variety of sources. The stories that informed practically all plays in the Athenian dramatic festivals (indeed, only Aeschylus’ Persians was based on an historical event—all the rest were based in myth), were familiar tales to the audience. There might be changes or variations by the tragedians, but spectators had a sense of where the majority of the plays’ plots were
headed. We do not always have such an understanding when we sit down to read a Greek tragedy, and so the reputation of certain characters can color our reading. Everyone knows about Oedipus’ sleeping with his mother, but he is a great deal more complex than this. Medea, too, suffers from a reductive reputation. As Margaret Atwood puts it, of all the seductive, sinister and transgressive women who have haunted the Western imagination, none has a reputation more lurid than Medea’s. Judith, Salome, Jezebel, Delilah, Lady Macbeth—these murdered or betrayed grown men, but Medea’s crimes are yet more chilling: credited with having slaughtered her younger brother, she is also said to have a sacrificed her own two children out of revenge for rejected love (ix).

Atwood’s assessment is spot on, but it also simplifies the complexities of the heroine, and it leads readers to a perhaps unfair conclusion about her. Therefore patching together a fuller picture of a myth is especially important when it comes to Medea. Medea is a victim before she is a criminal. And she is a selfless young woman before she is the repulsive murderer, as most modern readers know her. Because this dissertation will study her and her Euripidean portrayal so closely, it is advisable to provide some background to her mythos for the non-specialist. What follows is a detailed overview of Medea’s story. In myth, Medea has deep roots, and references to her story appear in Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Euripides, Simonides, Apollonius of Rhodes, Ovid, and other fragments from poets such as Eumelus, Parmenicus, and Creophylus. The scattered and fragmentary nature of all Greek myth (not just Medea’s mythology) need not be recounted here. The scope of this dissertation requires an understanding of Medea’s character on the part of the reader, but not an understanding of every textual variant and

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oral tradition. We focus here, therefore, on her narrative as it has come to us over time. The lacunose nature of all ancient myth does not allow for a great deal more than this anyhow.

Medea’s story begins with the hero Jason. Jason’s father, Aison, was deposed and killed by Pelias, Jason’s uncle. Jason was rescued and sent away to be educated by the Centaur Chiron (the same centaur who tutored Achilles). Pelias was a wicked and cruel ruler, and when Jason came back to Iolcus to claim the throne, Pelias, realizing that he could not simply murder Jason, agreed to relinquish his seat in exchange for the Golden Fleece: Pelias sent Jason on an impossible task that would surely kill him. The Golden Fleece was kept at the far reaches of the known world. And so, Jason and the Argonauts set sail for Colchis, on the Black Sea.³ It was Medea’s father, Aietes, who was its custodian, however, and when Jason arrived at Colchis to get the Fleece, Aietes struck a deal with Jason. Jason could have the Fleece if he accomplished the impossible: yoke some fire-breathing oxen, plow a field and sow it with dragon’s teeth, then do battle with the men that will sprout from the teeth and pop out of the earth. This cannot go well for our Greek hero. Except that he has some help. Medea has fallen in love with the Greek would-be hero, and, as a witch, has the powers to help him in these impossible tasks. She helps Jason to make it through Aietes’ impossible tasks, to kill the dragon guarding the Fleece, and to flee Colchis.

³ I note here that Medea, basically, is Georgian. It’s worth remembering, however, that during Annenskii’s lifetime, modern Georgia was Russia. This effectively makes Medea a Russian subject. As much as I might desperately want to find some significance in the idea that her Russianness was important to Annenskii, I cannot make the connection stick—it’s just not there. I do leave the reader to ruminate on this, though: perhaps Annenskii’s sympathy for Medea is larger than just his proto-feminist ideas, but also has a patriotic tint, and he cares for Medea not only as a victimized woman but also as a fellow Russian, stolen and then betrayed by a symbol of the West, a Greek hero.
So it is with Jason’s arrival that Medea comes onto the scene, underscoring the argument that all Greek myths are just episodes in a larger narrative or mythos. For Medea’s part, her story is one of love and tragedy. She falls in love with Jason and helps him, but it is not as though she simply gives him a key to the castle or some simple spell to charm the dragon. In their escape together from Colchis, Medea kills her only brother, cuts him into little pieces, and scatters him into the sea. This slows down Aietes’ pursuit, for the father must recover all of his son’s bits in order to give him proper burial. Already, before she even arrives in Greece, Medea has betrayed her father and killed her brother. She has done these things for Jason: an inauspicious start to a turbulent life abroad. Indeed, when Jason and Medea arrive back in Iolcus, Medea brings about the death of Pelias (Jason’s wicked uncle). Medea tells Pelias’ daughters that she can restore Pelias to youth. They do not believe her, of course, so she kills a ram, puts it in a cauldron of potions, and, to their disbelief, the ram comes back to life. Any doubt about Medea’s powers as a sorceress should now be gone. Pelias’ daughters, amazed, accept Medea’s claim, and they kill Pelias in order to rejuvenate him in the potion-filled cauldron. Medea, of course, leaves the potent ingredients out, and Pelias dies at the hands of his own children. This is no insignificant point. Between her trickery at Iolcus and her treatment of Aspyrtos, her brother, we see in Medea a history of kin-violence. This does not predict her killing of her own children, but it certainly prefigures the infanticide, in a certain way.

On the lam again, Jason and Medea land in Corinth, the mythical and historical rival of Athens. It cannot be overstated that Medea is a stranger in a strange land. Not only is she a foreigner and a woman, two particularly strong signifiers of the Other in
ancient Greece, but she is also a foreign woman with a violent past and a penchant for magic. She is scary. Ruby Blondell, in the introduction to her translation of Euripides’ *Medea*, explains that we must not confuse Medea’s witchcraft, or the Greek view of magic, with the medieval and early American fears of witches. The medieval European and early American context is a distinctly Christian one. Blondell notes, however, that “there are certain points of continuity, above all in the persistence with which male anxiety conceptualizes female agency and sexual autonomy as an exertion of demonic power” (151). And so while Medea’s sorcery, in its Greek context, is not a *prima facie* strike against her, the fear she has engendered by the uses of her magic precedes her when she comes to Corinth and fuels the oppressive Greek view of women. Further, Medea is no typical Greek woman. We will investigate this in greater detail later, but Greek women were supposed to be passive, weak. This explains, in part, the Greek demand (at least at Euripides’ time) that women must be accompanied by a *kourios* (guardian) whenever they went out of the house. Medea defies this norm in spades; she takes many dramatic and dangerous actions on her own, without consulting Jason, and leaves a trail of bodies—male bodies—in her wake. Taken with her foreign status, her history of violence against men would have been especially threatening (and anxiety producing, to borrow Blondell’s language) in her myth’s ancient reception.

Not long after their arrival in Corinth, Jason, ever the opportunist, conspires with the king, Creon, to marry the local princess. This is where the action of Euripides’ play begins. Jason claims that marrying Creon’s daughter is for the children’s sake, as this will gain them status and security in the city, especially given Medea’s reputation. This is a weak argument, but more to the point: Jason takes this action behind Medea’s back.
In his *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue*, a deadpan Christopher Gill notes, “the claim that one has remarried (in secret) for the sake of one’s previous wife and children (549-67) seems abnormal by virtually any standard” (163). Mastronarde assesses it thus: “Jason’s abandonment of Medea is, from his own point of view, a denial of her status as an equal participant in an exchange-relationship. From the perspective of Medea (and Aegeus), however, his actions show that he is himself not an *agathos*, as his birth and adventures suggest, but a *kakos*” (31). What is at stake here for Medea is twofold: 1) Jason has broken his side of the marital bargain by abandoning Medea; 2) Jason’s leaving Medea leaves her vulnerable and puts her on the run again—and, in such a tribal society as ancient Greece, sanctuary is hard to come by, so the next leg of her journey poses special problems and much pain.

What follows in Euripides’ version of the Medea myth, which is the ossified telling, is nothing less than the undoing of Jason, and Medea’s near apotheosis. Creon announces Medea’s exile. She brokers one more day in the city to get her affairs in order. During this final day, she cuts a deal for refuge with Aegeus, the king of Athens, in exchange for helping him have a child; she kills Creon and the princess—so Jason’s local family is gone; she kills her sons—so Jason’s legacy and paternity is gone; she flees *ex machina*—she is the only mortal in extant tragedy to appear on the *mēchanē*. On a certain level, Jason flaunts the power of the oath, which was not a trifling matter in ancient Greece, and he breaks his contract with Medea. In legal terms, Medea will never be made whole (she has, after all, lost her natal family, is an exile, and finds herself with no institutional recourse), but she requires some remedy for Jason’s breach of contract. Her injury is grievous, but alas, what is her recourse? She must take action on her own
because there is no system, save the gods, in place for her to recover from the serious losses she has suffered by Jason’s decisions and actions. Indeed, “where Jason had abandoned the system (at least as far as his tie to Medea is concerned), Medea manipulates and corrupts the system both to underline its importance and to prove that she knows how to help friends and harm enemies” (Mastronarde 31). She can give it to the Greeks, much as she took it.

After the infanticide, Medea leaves Corinth and makes her way to Athens, where she will help Aegeus produce an heir (either by her drugs, or by laying with him herself). In the time that follows, Aegeus’ previously born son, whom the king does not know, returns to Athens. Medea recognizes him as Aegeus’ son before the king does, and she sees in Theseus a threat to her security at Athens—for what good is she to Aegeus if he already has a son, and a famous, heroic, law-establishing son at that? Medea tries to poison Theseus, but before he drinks the fatal draft, Aegeus recognizes his son and stops Theseus from imbibing. This puts Medea on the run again, and she flees to the land of the Medes (western Persia), thus setting the stage for Herodotus’ claim that she is the eponymous founding ruler of the Medoi.

**Our Project**

In the final analysis, Medea’s time at Corinth is complicated: she commits heinous acts, but not without reason. Does this justify the infanticide? No. But Euripides is not concerned with Medea’s crimes in such a simple way as to mitigate the crime somehow. As Blondell argues,

One might expect any representation of a woman who kills her own children to be unequivocally negative. But Euripides…goes
beyond such easy judgments to explore the cultural, material and psychological circumstances that might make a person behave in such a way, and even to stir sympathy for his heroine. In doing so he is in accord with an interesting countercurrent in Greek literature, xenophobic and misogynistic as it so often is. The Other—whether foreigner, enemy, or woman—is often portrayed with remarkable sympathy (e.g., the Trojans in the Iliad, the Persians in Aeschylus’ play of that name, and Kassandra in Aeschylus’ Agamemnon). 156

Evoking sympathy would be important for a playwright looking to comment against inequitable treatments among the sexes. There is no way of knowing the ancient reception of this critique. We know that Euripides came in third (out of three) at the dramatic festival in which Medea was staged. But his Medea, first performed in 431 BCE, is Euripides’ second surviving play. There is something perennially disturbing, but also enduring about the text. One of Aeschylus’ sons, Euphorion, took first place at the festival. If you’ve never heard of Euphorion, this only underscores my point about the Medea’s continued importance.

What remains is to establish and examine the importance of Innokentii Annenskii’s feminist translation of the Euripides tragedy. As implied in the initial pages of this dissertation, translation is an undertaking that requires patience and care, and because translation is, at its root, an act of reading and Barthesian writing, no “perfect” translation exists. This is good. There is little use in a perfect one-to-one translation, were this even possible. And it is quite impossible:

Even Samuel Beckett does not provide the ‘perfect’ translation of his own work, on occasion varying the meaning between French and English text. The notion of the perfect translation of a play is as alien as the idea of a finished play on the page. But as an apparently definitive production of any classic may be definitive only until social shift makes alternatives viable or inevitable, so it is not a
Translation is interpretation and rewriting. Even those who can read a source text in the original language cannot expect to understand that source text in any pure way. All acts of reading are acts of interpretation; according to Barthes, all acts of reading are acts of writing. Is not every act of reading, therefore, an act of translation?

In his seminal essay, “The Task of the Translator,” Walter Benjamin makes the claim that “a real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully” (80). The reality, however, is that translations tend to filter light, directing it to specific spots on the original, and inviting readers to see parts of the original. Along with the impossibility to produce a perfect translation, it is not possible to be a fully transparent one. Translator choice will always block some light from reaching the original for the reader. In this way, the survival of an original, the afterlife. The afterlife of a text relies on new readings and translations. To quote Benjamin again, “the range of life must be determined by history rather than by nature” (73). What will be seen in the analysis that follows is that Innokentii Annenskii, via his 1903 translation, and through the marriage of his academic and poetic bona fides, directed a radical understanding, a new light, on Euripides’ Medea years before scholars would effectively write the critical story.

The following chapter lays out two important elements under consideration: Annenskii himself and the Silver Age cultural context in which he was working, for both Annenskii’s biographical details and the artistic movements around him influenced his work on Euripides; establishing these influences will help us situate more precisely his
place in the period. A critical overview of Russia’s Silver Age is important both for the specialist and the non-specialist. There is some debate among Slavists concerning the parameters and definitions of the Silver Age, and so it is useful to establish how I approach the period. For the non-specialist, this overview is essential because this period of Russian Modernism is not well known; it was a unique literary moment marked by many names, many movements, and many philosophies. A close look at Annenskii’s biography, which includes an examination of the development of classical studies in Imperial Russia, especially in the context of the Silver Age, will help us later to reassess Annenskii’s place in Russian belles-lettres, which is one of the principal goals of this dissertation.

Chapter Three provides a biographical sketch of Euripides and an important look at the tragedian’s perceived misogyny. In this way, the chapter explores Euripides’ life and work, such as we understand it, for the extant biographical information on him is often conjecture or based on the comedies and tragedies of his time. While anecdotes hardly provide hard data, in the case of most figures from fifth century Greece, it is all we have. The reader will see that much of Euripides’ biography is full of caveats and “probablys.” There are certainties, of course, because we know that he grew up in Athens in the mid-fifth century BCE. Surely, therefore, Euripides underwent the typical military training as a young man, but these types of certainties do not flush out the full picture of the man. Chapter Three also considers Euripides’ reception in the Russian Silver Age and the general claim that he was a misogynist, a charge often leveled against the playwright based on the Medea. I fight this claim of misogyny as one not rooted in textual analysis.
Chapter Three thus devotes significant space to my analysis of Euripides’ Medea and questions of gender. This detailed section is essential to the larger project we undertake here. The central claim of this dissertation is that Innokentii Annenskii’s translation of the Medea is a feminist interpretation of the tragedy, and as such it is well ahead of its time. Classical studies, indeed literary studies have come a long way since 1903, when Annenskii published his Medea translation. In order to demonstrate how against the grain Annenskii was, it is important to use our 21st century methodologies and exegetical tools to show what Euripides was up to in his play. My close reading of the tragedy in this chapter argues that it is no longer viable to read Medea as either masculine or feminine, a long used binary in the literature. Medea is a social androgyne, whose social modalities destabilize traditional readings of her gender. I reevaluate Euripides’ representation of Medea’s gender as a complex of spatial, linguistic, and representational code breaking. These violations reveal Medea’s mixed gender to be modally and textually significant not only for our understanding of the play, but also for the translator, who must consider the socio-cultural commentary within a source text before carrying it over into the target language. Annenskii certainly makes no such claims about Medea or her androgyny, as these terms, these analyses, are built on the decades of research that has come since the Russian. Annenskii does, however, produce a translation that seems acutely aware of Medea’s sympathetic and radical position in classical Athens. His translation is a subtle feminist analysis of the heroine, despite the fact that she will be villainized by critics for nearly a century after Annenskii.

Chapter Four, therefore, is a close reading and analysis of Annenskii’s Medea translation. This chapter constitutes the central section of the dissertation for two
reasons. First, it is precisely through a directed reading of the translation that we may observe Annenskii’s reading of Euripides, and thus it forms the basis of our reevaluation of Annenskii’s place in Russian Modernism. Secondly, Slavists and Comparatists have long neglected the Silver Age translations of Greek literature. I hope that a close reading of Annenskii’s translation will help fill the critical lacuna surrounding the translation from ancient Greece and Rome by the Silver Age poets and encourage other scholars to revisit these informative and important texts.

To accomplish this task, Chapter Four examines both Annenskii’s translation work generally and the paucity of critical comment on this enormous part of his oeuvre, and takes a close look at Annenskii’s translation approach. Annenskii never established a fixed theory of translation (none of the Symbolists did—rather we have scattered comments, ideas, and discussions, but no real Silver Age “theory” of translation), but we tease out a translation program from the limited work done on his translations from the Greek, as well as the smattering of comments he left.

Chapter Four then dives into the text, examining certain poetic elements of Euripides’ tragic art and Annenskii’s handling of them in the Medea. Specifically, we examine issues of meter, preserved or highlighted sense, and impressionistic/interpretive readings of the play by Annenskii and how these translation elements constitute his feminist reading of the play. Because of space, the chapter focuses on three specific passages: the prologue-monologue, the first messenger rhesis, and the first choral ode. Other passages are considered. To carry out the argument that Annenskii brings his philological prowess to bear on his poetic sensibility in order to craft a feminist translation of the Medea, of course, the chapter considers many aspects of both the
original Greek and the Russian translation. Chapter Four is not an exhaustive study of Euripides’ text, but it does draw upon much Euripides, Medea, and Attic drama criticism to show that Annenskii was engaged in a much more complicated task than simply carrying the play over into Russian.

The conclusion of this dissertation addresses new directions and considerations for the Comparatist. Specifically, I call for a translation studies that does more to contribute to Comparative Literature, Classics, and Slavic Studies. Such a reoriented focus on translation will uncover fecund data. This dissertation models one possible methodology for how to mine poets’ translations for new perspectives and insights into their literary projects and legacies.
Chapter 2

The biographical information about certain poets of the Silver Age is exhaustive. For example, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii’s is very complete. In addition to Gippius’ biography, his own “Starinnye oktavy” as well as various monographs and articles about him, his poetry, and his significance (see, e.g., Rosenthal’s Dmitri Sergeevich Merezhkovsky and the Silver Age: The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality 1975; Bedford’s The Seeker: D. S. Merezhkovskiy 1975; and Chuzeville’s Dmitri Mérejkowsky: l’àme russe et nous 1922), provide very complete sketches of the man’s life and work. Other members of the Silver Age pantheon enjoy a more spurious biographical body. With Innokentii Annenskii, as with some of his contemporaries, we must grapple with missing or corrupted data. For years, even his date of birth was subject to debate: 1855, 1856, and 1858 have all appeared in major critics. We get snippets of biographical information from his poetry and essays, but, as Catriona Kelly explains, the poems are dubious: “like many symbolists, Annenskii mythologised his own biography, particularly in his lyric poetry. Isolation and anxiety were central elements in the myth; and there is no need for the critic to accept this account unquestioningly” (1985, 5).

Despite the presence of biographies about Annenskii, we cannot help but use his creative output as one source of information about his life, but we must do so cautiously.

There are three major competing biographies of Annenskii. The first, written by his son, under the pseudonym Valentin Krivich, is shot through with problems due to Krivich’s own literary aspirations; Vsevolod Setchkarev’s monograph, the first general study written on Annenskii in any language, provides an extensive biography of the poet, but its main source is the unreliable Krivich, and, to complicate matters, since its
publication (1963) many more writings by and about Annenskii have become available; finally, the first monograph on Annenskii in Russian, by Andrei Fedorov, appeared only in 1985. Catriona Kelly claims that the biography provided in Fedorov’s first chapter is the most reliable available, but even Fedorov relies heavily on Krivich, whom she criticizes heavily, and Fedorov’s book was not very well received.\footnote{Anthony Anemone’s review of Fedorov’s book does not inspire much hope in the reader: “Already the editor of the standard Soviet editions, and the author of several important critical essays, Fedorov has been working on Annenskii for nearly fifty years and has now produced the first monograph devoted to Annenskii’s life and works to appear in the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, readers who expected a definitive statement from the dean of Soviet Annenskii specialists will be disappointed. \textit{Innokentii Annenskii: Lichnost’ i tvorchestvo} is a profoundly flawed book that, perhaps, tells us more about the problems of much Soviet scholarship on the prerevolutionary avant-garde than it does about Annenskii himself” (693). Indeed, Fedorov adds nothing to what Setchkarev had already done, and so Fedorov remains just as problematic a source as those who came before him.} All of this poses certain problems for the scholar who looks to study Innokentii Annenskii. The scholarship on Annenskii written prior to 1985, which is not substantial compared to what has been written since, must be read with an understanding that a Setchkarev did not have access to the same information available to us now. We must read this dated scholarship with an awareness of its inherent shortcomings. What frustrates, however, is that we simply must read this dated scholarship, for there is not a great deal of criticism available on the Russian. Compared to many of his contemporaries, interest in Annenskii is late in coming, and it is scant. Add to the dearth of Annenskii research the problematic nature of biographical notes by his friends and colleagues. Annenskii appeared on the Russian literary scene late in his life. Even though he published his first collection of poetry, \textit{Tikhie pesni} (\textit{Quiet Songs}, 1904) during the most active decade of the Silver Age, he was already forty-nine years old, older even than Viacheslav Ivanov, who was known as the elder statesmen of the period. Those who were coming to know him through his literary celebrity were coming to know a man with only several years of life left. In spite
of these challenges, though, we do have a clear enough understanding of the periods of Annenskii’s life, the trajectory of his work, and how he contributed to the Silver Age of Russian poetry. Before we delve deeper into who Annenskii was and how his translation of the Medea helps delineate his true contribution to Russian literature, we ought to clarify what the Silver Age is.

The Silver Age

Slavists continue to debate the details of the Silver Age of Russian literature: When did it start? When did it end? Who were the leaders? Who has been overlooked? Was it Nietzsche or the French Parnassians, was it Goethe and Novalis, or was it Baudelaire and Verlaine who most inspired the new ideas? These details reveal much about this Chimera called the Silver Age and deserve our attention here.

There are some givens. The major figures speak for themselves through their writing. The outlets for many of these writings, journals such as Vesy, Zolotoe Runo, Mir Isskustva, Apollon, et al., have received much scholarly comment. The major poetic schools have manifestoes, proponents, rebels, and fixed names. We must not overlook the many details that themselves become subjects of monographs, and we will come to some of these details later. First, though, it is advisable to put this period into a working context. This is essential for the non-Slavist, and it benefits the specialist, too, as every critic’s interpretations, arguments, and conclusions result from how she draws from this context. As Bernice Rosenthal has noted, “common assumptions impart a definite unity to the artists and writers of the Silver Age, which, from our perspective, is far more important than the many fundamental differences between them” (1975, 5). The
differences can only emerge in a meaningful way when we have located the similarities, the stable foundation of our understanding of the period.

Before we can begin to lay out an historical outline of the Silver Age, we really must consider the label assigned to it. Terming this period, which runs from 1893-1932\(^5\), the “Silver Age” includes several value judgments, and it indicates a certain aspect of the aesthetic that defines this literary epoch. If we can call this moment “silver,” then clearly there a Golden Age came first, and we are assuming a second-rate quality inherent in Russian Modernism, when in reality this mindset makes faulty comparisons and value judgements. By accepting this label, in a way, we are accepting other critics’ pronouncements that by 1893 Russian belles-lettres had peaked. The Golden Age of Russian poetry, broadly understood as 1820-1840, had no shortage of genius, but in terms of pushing language to its limit, in terms of huge personalities, in terms of poetic inspiration, creativity, mastery of form, or poetic achievement, does one period truly deserve second place?

Of course, Aleksandr Pushkin, like Shakespeare in the English tradition, opened new possibilities for all subsequent Russian writers, but, given the major differences between them, we do not talk of James Joyce as playing second fiddle to Will. Indeed, Joyce, in the context of English literature, is more like the woodwind section to Shakespeare’s strings. Similarly, consigning by label the Russian Decadents, Symbolists, Acmeists, and Futurists to the level of understudies is to misplace them in the orchestra of

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\(^5\) I mark the end of the Silver Age with the Soviet state’s declaration that socialist realism would be the official artistic prerogative of writers in the USSR. This decree came in the first half of 1932, followed swiftly by Stalin’s Terror. Some scholars end the Silver Age in 1914, with the onset of World War I, others at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, in 1917, and still others find its end in 1921, the year of the deaths of Aleksander Blok and Nikolai Gumilev. I prefer 1932, as many of the artistic verve of the height of the Silver Age continued through the Acmeist and Futurist schools of Russian poetry. Ending the period too early excludes these, and it was the Soviet program that dealt the death blow to Russian Modernism.
Russian literature. At some point, of course, we must compare such disparate talents, but we should do this on an individual basis. Is Shakespeare better than Joyce? Perhaps. But is Elizabethan literature superior to English Modernism?

On the one hand, I reject the value judgment embedded in the metallurgical imagery of the term “Silver Age;” on the other hand, though, it is very apt in its descriptive quality of the cultural production of the period. The imagery is useful and appropriate in two ways. Firstly, to invoke an Adam and Eve comparison, Silver Age literature is a poetry fallen from grace, yet loosed from the constraints of an Edenic poetry. It pushes boundaries heretofore avoided. It is a poetry looking for comfort outside the garden of God. We will discuss in broad strokes the evolution of education in Imperial Russia below, but, suffice it for now to say that the state of learning and the way Russians viewed the world changed remarkably during the 19th century. When we look at the Silver Age, we see a more philosophical age, at a more confounding time, and we see an age during which thinkers doubted more than ever. Nietzscheanism dictated much of the intellectual verve of the 1890s, while the neo-Platonism of Vladimir Solov’ev proved fundamental to many of the poets of the early 20th century. Essentially, knowledge exploded. Situating Dmitrii Merezhkovskii in his fin de siècle context, Bernice Rosenthal offers, “Merezhkovsky in particular and the Silver Age in general must be understood in the context of the Europeanwide disillusion with the Enlightenment and with Positivism, its crude nineteenth century derivative” (7). Plenty of well educated Russians came before the Silver Age, and the Golden Age poets were certainly among them, but particularly following the return of Russian soldiers from the Napoleonic conflicts, the Russian intelligentsia became all the more worldly. They thus became all
the more unsure of the world around them. In a way, they fell from the grace of confidence in faith, and confidence in the habitual world. The Silver Age very much ate from the Tree.

Secondly, we might appropriately refer to Russian Modernism as an age of Silver because of the prevalent imagery, the language, and the issues explored. So much of the impressionistic, transcendental, spiritual, esoteric, and erudite language of the Silver Age poets can be seen as language for the night, language in search of light, but not necessarily enjoying it. Merezhkovskii’s “Deti nochi” (“Children of the Night”) suggests a desire for light, but an apprehension about the discovery; it suggests comfort in the night and in the dark. Konstantin Bal’mont’s poem, “Ya v etot mir prishel...” (“I Came to this World...”), in which the poet essentially apotheosizes himself and takes on the role of a prophet, reveals more optimism than Merezhkovskii’s, but the language does not fundamentally change:

Я в этот мир пришел, чтоб видеть Солнце
И синий кругозор.
Я в этот мир пришел, чтоб видеть Солнце
И выси гор.

Я в этот мир пришел, чтоб видеть Море
И пышный цвет долин
Я заключил миры в едином взоре,
Я властелин.

Я победил холодное забвенье,
Создав мечту мою.
Я каждый миг исполнен откровенья,
Всегда пою.

Мою мечту страданья пробудили
Но я любим за то.
Кто равен мне в моей певучей силе?
Никто, никто.
I came to this world to see the Sun
And a blue vista.
I came to this world to see the Sun,
And the high mountains.

I came to this world to see the Sea
And the splendid color of the valley.
I took in the worlds in a single glance,
I am the master.

I conquered cold oblivion,
Creating my dream.
I was fulfilled with revelation at each moment,
I am always singing.

Sufferings roused my dream,
But I am loved because of it.
Who is equal to me in my melodious strength?
Nobody, nobody.

I came into this world to see the Sun
But if the day is extinguished,
I shall sing...I shall sing about the Sun
In my dying hour.

Even Aleksandr Blok’s interest in characters of the night (e.g. “Neznakomka” (“An Unknown Woman”)) indicates his attraction to the darkened, the dim, certainly not the dandies and elaborate courtships of the Golden Age. In short, the Symbolists’ sought to suggest rather than to state outright; they chose to highlight what hides in shadows, rather than worrying about what we all see. For many of these poets, the goal was not the visible, the apparent, but rather the higher reality of spiritual worlds. How, though, did Russian belles lettres arrive at such an outlook? How did these poets find themselves immersed in their own modernism?
Following the Golden Age of Russian poetry, which one can understand thematically as a period of Romanticism, prose replaces poetry’s primacy. We thus enter the period of the Russian novel, whose monuments are probably the best known to the world. Earlier Russian novels certainly helped shape Russian literature, but following Pushkin and his towering Evgenii Onegin (Eugene Onegin), six men and their novels dominate the next fifty years. Mikhail Lermontov, Nikolai Gogol’, Ivan Turgenev, Ivan Goncharov, Lev Tolstoi, and Fedor Dostoevskii not only perfected the form in Russia, but they also gave to Russia her penchant for moral edification; to the world they gave some of literature’s most remarkable characters. In Richard Freeborn’s estimation, “no other half-century of novel-writing in any literature has been able to match it” (110).

Dostoevskii, though, dies in 1881, and with him essentially died Russia’s literary inspiration. With Tolstoi’s withdrawal from creative writing, the age of the Russian novel gave way to the flat, civic Populist period, and a new poetry emerged bent on extolling the virtues of the masses. We can speak of the poets of the 1880s as civic poets, or Populists, but “the 1880’s produced no literary school of their own. They merely marked the end of one period in Russian literature and sounded a few introductory notes that characterized the following movement that was to follow. The 1880’s were a decade that separated two literary eras” (Maslenikov, 7).

As stated earlier, Russia’s Silver Age begins in 1893, and will eventually lay claim to the Decadent, Symbolist, Acmeist, and Futurist schools of poetry. In 1893 the erstwhile Populist poet, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, publishes his groundbreaking “O prichinakh upadka i o novykh techeniiakh sovremennoi russkoi literatury” (“On the reasons for the Decline and on New Trends in Contemporary Russian Literature”) and his
first book of verse, Simvoly (Symbols). With these publications, Merezhkovskii completed his break from Nadson, Uspenskii, and the rest of the Populist movement. Simply put, Merezhkovskii opened the door of modernism for Russian writers. Merezhkovskii had grown tired with the spiritual dead ends he found with Populism and the civic poets’ mythologizing of the “muzhik” (“the common man”). For the populists, the peasant became the ideal, a symbol, the paragon of native wisdom, kindliness, and patience. Tolstoi added to the growing image in his depiction of Platon Karataev in War and Peace; and Dostoevskiy, with his mystic slavophilism, lent further support to the idealization of the masses by the intelligentsia. (Bedford, 1975, 17)

Merezhkovskii appreciated the Populists’ project, but it did not connect with him aesthetically: even his early poetry of the 1880s shows a nascent symbolist mood and decadent flavor. A poem such as “Vse grezy iunosti i vse moi zhelan’ia” (“All the dreams of youth and all my desires”) shows that despite his reverence for the civic minded poets, he did not belong with them. We see, then, that Merezhkovskii did not suddenly reject his Populist colleagues, but when he finally expressed his own poetic prerogative, others in Russia were ready for what he had to say. We might say that with “O prichinakh…” Merezhkovskii voiced his generation’s anxiety of being adrift artistically and spiritually.

Merezhkovskii expressed for his age the need for a new art, new artists, and a new direction for the soul. His “Deti nochi” (1894) is nothing short of a rain dance for the parched Russian literary scene:

Устремляя наши очи
На бледнеющий восток,
Дети скорби, дети ночи,
Ждем, придет ли наш пророк.
И, с надеждою в сердцах,
Умирая, мы тоскуем
О несозданных мирах.
Мы неведомое чуем.
Дерзновенны наши речи,
Но на смерть осуждены
Слишком ранние предтечи
Слишком медленной весны.
Погребенных воскресенье
И, среди глубокой тьмы,
Петуха ночной пенье,
Холод утра—это мы.
Наши гимны — наши стоны;
Мы для новой красоты
Нарушаем все законы,
Преступаем все черты.
Мы – соблазн неутолённых,
Мы – посмешище людей,
Искра в пепле оскорблённых
И потухших алтарей.
Мы— над бездною ступени,
Дети мрака, солнца ждем:
Свет увидим и, как тени,
Мы в лучах его умрем.

(228)

Fixing our eyes
On the pale-growing east,
We, children of sorrow, children of the night
We are waiting, should our prophet arrive.
And with hope in our hearts,
Dying, we long for
Worlds not yet created.
We sense the unknown,
Our speeches are daring,
But they are condemned to death,
Too early predecessors of
Too slow a spring.
The resurrection of the buried,
And the rooster’s night song
Among profound darkness,
A cold morning—it’s us.
Our hymns are our groans;
For a new Beauty, we
Break all laws,
We transgress all boundaries.
We are of the unsatisfied temptations,
We are of those laughed at,
The spark and the ash of sorrowful
And extinct altars.
We are above an abyss of steps,
Children of darkness, we await the sun,
We shall see the light and, like shadows,
We will die in its rays.

Poetically, Briusov’s **Russkie simvolisty** (Russian Symbolists), in two volumes, caused a much bigger stir a few years later. Merezhkovskii founded the Symbolist movement in Russia, for Briusov’s “first undertaking was to make a splash as an *épater* poet, not to provide the theoretical underpinnings for a literary movement” (McLean, 402).

However, Briusov now found himself as a leader in the movement. Merezhkovskii, though, in addition to providing the first creative entrée, also provided the first theoretical stab: “O prichinakh...” (1893) reveals that classicism as the keystone of much of the Symbolist movement from its beginnings. Of course, not all Russian Symbolist poets concerned themselves with classical motifs, nor did an affinity for the Greco-Roman world inspire all of them. Such concerns are, however, quite prevalent throughout the theoretical writings of the Symbolists; and whatever classical reference may be missing in Blok, for instance, is more than made up for in Ivanov or Annenskii.6 It is unnecessary to list the many Symbolist poems that took their impetus from a Greco-Roman motif. For the Symbolists, while they did not all accept (indeed, some flatly rejected) Nietzsche, there is a Nietzschean attitude in the movement, a glance cast back to the Greek to help them reconcile themselves with their moment. In Rosenthal’s estimation, “a combination

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6 It is not, of course, fair to suggest that either of these poets knew only some sort of neo-classicism. Annenskii is often considered more pre-Acmeist than strictly Symbolist, and that the Acmeists (Mandel’shtam, Akhmatova, etc.) “appealed to [Annensky] shows the continuity with Symbolism in spite of their distaste for the occult and their emphasis on what they thought of as classical clarity” (Wellek, 262). Ivanov, for his part, proves himself far too erudite for just the Classics. Ivanov’s poetry teems with references to archaic Russian folklore, Eastern legends, Christian mythology, and countless other references one requires a concordance to catch.
of Nietzschean individualism and symbolist mysticism gave the art and thought of the Silver Age its distinctive flavor. Their mutual preference for inner experience and subjective visions affected literature, poetry, music, painting, and philosophy” (77). In both St. Petersburg and Moscow, a new aesthetic was developing, one whose responsibilities to its generation were only beginning to take shape.

Critics often speak of two generations of Russian Symbolists: the “elder symbolists,” with such poets as Merezhkovskii, Zinaida Hippius, his wife, and Valerii Briusov; and the “younger symbolists,” whose leaders include Andrei Belyi, Aleksandr Blok, and Viacheslav Ivanov. Both generations share an unprecedented collection of erudite artists who viewed their tasks as poets in a wholly new way. Generally, Slavists divide the two generations along philosophical lines. There are few hard and fast rules, of course, essentially because many of the poets showed a willingness to evolve philosophically over time. Nevertheless, the elder generation tended toward decadence, whereas the younger generation tended toward mysticism. Both generations saw art in religious terms, valuing the role of the poet as something of a prophet, or direct link to the otherworldly. Such poems as Blok’s “I announced the unearthly to you”) illustrate this belief that the poet functioned as a link between other worlds and this earthly existence, between the masses and a higher reality, a more meaningful existence. Blok bookends his poem thus:

Я вам поведал неземное.
Я все сковал в воздушной мгле.
В ладье—топор. В мечте—герои.
Так я причаливал к земле.

[...]

7 There is no relationship between the age of a poet and whether or not he would be classified as “elder” or “younger.” This is an issue of chronology. 1900 is more or less the dividing line.
I announced the unearthly to you.
I forged everything in airy darkness.
In the vessel is an axe. In a dream are heroes.
Thus I moored to the earth.

[...]

And soon I will leave you,
And you will see me
Over there behind the smoky mountains,
Flown off in a cloud of fire!

The decadence, however, of the elder generation led some of those poets to solipsistic themes (a vestige of which one certainly observes in the Blok poem above), and interesting practices in their personal lives. Poems like Fedor Sologub’s programmatic “Я—бог таинственного мира” (“I am the god of a secret world”, 1894) show us the solipsistic attitude of some of the elder symbolists:

Я—бог таинственного мира,
Весь мир в одних моих мечтах.
Но сотворю себе кумира
Ни на земле, ни в небесах.

Моей божественной природы
Я не открою никому.
Тружусь, как раб, а для свободы
Зову я ночь, покой и тьму.

I am the god of a secret world,
The whole world exists only in my dreams.
I will not create an idol for myself,
Neither on earth nor in the heavens.

I do not open to anyone
My divine nature.
I toil, like a slave, but for the sake of freedom,
I invite night, peace, and darkness.

Meanwhile, critics like Poggioli highlight “the tendency on the part of the genuine Symbolists to yield no less supinely than their decadent brethren to the temptations of the demonic and the seductions of Satanism, to the superstitious worship of the blind and dark forces of the underworld” (148). We notes here that many of Poggioli’s comments are very much a product of a prudish time (his *The Poets of Russia, 1890-1930* was published in 1960), and he often judges practices that fall outside the norm as deviant. Poggioli’s conservative standpoint, however, does not undermine the fact that the elder symbolists dabbled in the occult, in Satanism, and in adventurous sex. Perhaps no better representation of this lifestyle exists than the poetically mediocre Aleksandr Dobroliubov’. Dobroliubov’ enjoyed black masses, drugs, and women. Eventually, Dobroliubov’ was expelled from Moscow University after several of his followers, young women, committed suicide in reverence to Dobroliubov’s belief in the “beauty of death.”

The younger Symbolists also endeavored to embody the spiritual and cutlish aspects of their poetry. Viacheslav Ivanov, widely recognized as the preeminent theoretical mouthpiece of the Symbolist movement, and a major Symbolist poet in his own right, held famous salons in his Petersburg apartment, known as “Wednesdays [later Thursdays] at the Tower;” these salons were one of the hotspots of St. Petersburg’s intellectual life at the time. At these gatherings Ivanov conducted Bacchic revelries and rituals well into the morning hours. Avril Pyman underscores the sexual aspect of Ivanov’s salons, co-hosted by his wife, Lidiia Zinov’eva-Annibal, while also revealing the complex nature of Ivanov’s philosophical approach to life:
The impact of the Ivanovs’ personalities, as opposed to the civilising force of Viacheslav’s subtle pen, and most particularly Ivanov’s genuine and profound love for ancient Greece, her tragic cults and Platonic Eros, immediately attracted all that wing of Silver Age culture which was itself in love with masks and play-acting and which found in antiquity the aestheticisation and justification of its own sexual ambiguity. Lidiia Zinov’eva-Annibal and Viacheslav Ivanov were both scornful of ‘petty-bourgeois morality’, and the erotic ambivalence which had been tolerated in Mir Isskustva and sublimated in Novyi Put’ became almost programmatic in the Tower. (271)

An ever-evolving ideological program marks the Symbolist period. The Symbolists embraced, at one time or another, Nietzscheanism; some sought solace from Nietzsche in Vladimir Solov’ev’s neo-Platonic philosophy; some sought answers in “mystical anarchism” (basically a rejection, inspired by the Revolution of 1905, of simple individualism, preferring to fuse individualism with collectivism to free the soul, even if the process caused social anarchy; such social chaos was marked, of course, by a libertinism that would aid in the freeing of the soul of the people); some, including Merezhkovskii, looked for a new form of spirituality as the “God Seekers.” These poets did not hesitate experiment, so long as there was potential to transcend to a new and deeper reality.

Poetically, Russian Symbolism is erudite, experimental, and powerful, at least insofar as the poets “hailed themselves as seers, prophets, and agents in the ultimate transformation of the world into a more perfect state” (Bedford, 1975, 38). Viacheslav Ivanov’s poem, “Krasota” (“Beauty”), the first poem of his first book of verse, Kormchye Zvezdy (Pilot Stars) serves as an illustrative example, and one of an unmistakably Symbolist aesthetic:

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8 Mir Isskustva (The World of Art) and Novyi Put’ (A New Path) were both important journals of the Silver Age, often publishing works by the Symbolists and other modernist intellectuals.
I see you, divine distances,
The Sparkling crystal of the mountains of Umbria!
Ah, there the gods justified my dream:
In reality, it appeared to a pilgrim there…

“Whether you are a daughter of the earth
Or of the heavens—pay heed:
I am yours! Your face shines eternally for me.”
“A secret to me myself, a secret to the world,
I, within my earthly abode,
Behold, I walk along the bright ether:
Pilgrim, you will henceforth gaze upon me!

He who has seen my face,
Has forever come to see clearly—
The terrestrial world is forever different.

“Gladly I go along flower-bearing Gaia,
Not knowing whither.
I serve Adrasteia with a smile,
The gracious-strange-virgin.

I bear the ring,
And my face—
The intimate beam of a secret Yes!”
This poem, an ontological statement lifting us out of the phenomenal world and into the noumenal, reveals much about Ivanov’s poetic project, but also much about Symbolism in Russia. The poem’s meter, trochaic pentameter, appears throughout Russian poetry, as in the lines of Lermontov, Annenskii, and Pasternak. The trochaic meter adds a flavor of the Russian folktale as well, and the many archaisms, mostly from a Church Slavonic lexicon, merit consideration. Words such as “v’iave” (“in reality”), “lik” (“face”), and “zret’/uzret’” (“to see”) give the poem an archaic feel, a liturgic register. The reference to things “secret” and “divine” (“tainstvennyi” and “bozhestvennyi”) reveal Ivanov’s theurgical role. In Ivanov’s famous formulation, he, the poet, a mouthpiece for the divine, brings us a realibus ad realiora (“from the real to the more real”). Such practices are hardly peculiar to Ivanov’s poetry, as we have seen already, and as any perusal through Silver Age poetry reveals.

Not all of the poets of the Silver Age, though, fit so easily into clear categories. Merezhkovskii was an elder Symbolist. Blok was a younger Symbolist. Akhmatova was an Acmeist. Maiakovskii was a Futurist. We can assign most of the Silver Age poets to a poetic school without stirring any real debate. One major poet of the time, however, resists definition by poetic school. Not only Innokentii Annenskii’s verse but also his influence on the next generation of poets has sealed his place in the Silver Age. Indeed, Annenskii cannot be pigeonholed as a Symbolist, though elements of Symbolism permeate his limited poetic corpus. He enjoys certain decadent motifs, yet he does not wallow in these themes. Annenskii believed in the power of the word as such, which prefigures the Acmeist movement that replaced Symbolism as the dominant school (starting around 1912). Indeed, Janet Tucker explains that
For the later [elder] Symbolists, concrete objects represented the earthly ties from which they were attempting to escape, while abstraction signified mystical retreat. Annenskiij’s preference for the definite and concrete would find a later expression in the essays of the Acmeists. (50)

How, then, ought we to classify an at times decadent Symbolist whose poetry flourished outside the Symbolist mood? Consider “Ametisty” (“Amethysts”), part of a trefoil from his second collection of verse, Kiparisovyi larets (The Cypress Chest):

Когда, сжигая синеву,
Багряный день растет неистов,
Как часто сумрак я зову,
Холодный сумрак аметистов.

И чтоб не знойные лучи
Сжигали грани аметиста,
А лишь мерцание свечи
Лилось там жидкo и огнisto.

И, лиловея и дробясь,
Чтоб уверяло там сиянье,
Что где-то есть не нашa связь,
А лучезарное слияние.

Когда, сжигая синеву,
Багряный день растет неистов,
Как часто сумрак я зову,
Холодный сумрак аметистов.

И чтоб не знойные лучи
Сжигали грани аметиста,
А лишь мерцание свечи
Лилось там жидкo и огнisto.

И, лиловея и дробясь,
Чтоб уверяло там сиянье,
Что где-то есть не нашa связь,
А лучезарное слияние.

(1981, 61)

When, burning up the blueness,
The day, crimson, grows frenzied,
How I often call twilight,
The cold twilight of amethysts.

And I wish scorching rays may not
Burn up the facets of the amethyst,
But only a flickering of a candle
Poured like liquid and like fire there.

And, growing lilac in color, and shattering,
Would that the radiance there promise
That somewhere might be not our connection,
But our radiant melding.

Or his “Sentiabr’” (“September”):
Gilded, but sickly gardens
Purple with temptation on their slow sicknesses,
And the late heat of the sun in its short arc,
A heat too weak to pour forth into the fragrant fruit.

And a yellow silk as a carpet, and rude tracks,
And understanding the lie of the last meeting,
And the ponds of the parks black and bottomless,
Long since prepared for ripe suffering…

But the heart dreams of the beauty of losses,
Only the rapture in captivating strength;
And it is those, who already partook of the lotus flower,
That the ingratiating autumnal aroma moves.

We will, of course, discuss Annenskii in much greater depth later, but, despite his homelessness in Russian Modernism, he did have a profound influence on the Acmeists, whose bigger names include Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandel’shtam, and Nikolai Gumilev. Gumilev founded Acmeism—also known as Adamism—in 1912. This new school, a reaction against Symbolism, “shoudered its way forward approximately three years after the crisis in Symbolism, a crisis marked by the split between Brjusov and ‘clarism’ on the one hand and Vjačeslav Ivanov, Andrej Belyj, and ‘mysticism’ on the other” (Tucker, 70). Less concerned with musicality than the Symbolists, the Acmeists
looked to build a poetry that valued concrete images, that valued art for art’s sake. In the
words of Mandel’shtam, in his essay, “Utro Akmeizma” (“The Morning of Acmeism”),

Акмеизм для тех, кто, обуянный духом строительства, не отказывается малодушно от своей тяжести, а радостно принимает ее, чтобы разбудить и использовать архитектурно спящих в ней силы. (SS, t. 2, 321)

“Acmeism is for those who, inspired by the spirit of building, do not, like cowards, renounce their own gravity, but joyously accept it in order to arouse and exploit the powers architecturally sleeping within.”

adding further that

A = A: какая прекрасная поэтическая тема. Символизм томился, скучал законом тождества, акмеизм делает его своим лозунгом и предлагает его вместо сомнительного a realibus ad realiora. (SS, t. 2, 324)

“A = A: what a magnificent theme for poetry! Symbolism languished and yearned for the law of identity. Acmeism made it its slogan and proposed its adoption instead of the ambiguous a realibus ad realiora.”

Mandel’shtam’s poem, “Notre Dame,” highlights the Acmeist emphasis on the concrete, the real, and the appreciation of artistic creation per se:

Где римский судия судил чужой народ,
Стоит базилика, и — радостный и первый —
Как некогда Адам, распластывая нервы,
Играет мышцами крестовый легкий свод.

Но выдает себя снаружи тайный план!
Здесь позаботилась подпруженный арок сила,
Чтоб масса грузная стены не сокрушила,
И свода дерзкого бездействует таран.

Стихийный лабиринт, непостижимый лес,
Души готической рассудочная пропасть,
Египетская мощь и христианства робость,
С тростинкой рядом—дуб и всюду царь—отвес.

Но чем внимательней, твердня Notre Dame,
Я изучал твои чудовищные ребра,—
Тем чаще думал я: из тяжести недобой
И я когда-нибудь прекрасное создам.

(SSI, t. 1, 24)

Where the Roman judge judged an alien people —
There stands the basilica — and, joyful and first,
Like Adam long before, stretching out his nerves,
The light groined-arch plays with its muscles.

But from the outside its secret plan betrays itself!
Here the strength of its saddle arches took care
In order that the bulky mass would not shatter the walls,
And the battering ram of its impertinent arch stands idle.

An elemental labyrinth, an incomprehensible forest,
The thoughtful abyss of the Gothic soul,
Egyptian power and Christian humility,
Next to a reed—an oak, and the plumb line is king everywhere.

But, O stronghold Notre Dame, the more attentively
I consider your monstrous ribs,
The more often I think: I too will create one day
Something beautiful out of hostile heaviness.

Focusing strictly on the issues at hand, we see in this poem a telling progression of language that betrays its programmatic goals. The first stanza is notable for its metaphysical and bodily language, anthropomorphizing the Parisian cathedral; the second stanza shifts to a technical, architectural vocabulary, which carefully describes the artistry of the Gothic, craft-centered marvel; the third stanza, remarkably, contains no verbs, and focuses the reader on a horizontal/vertical dichotomy; finally, the fourth stanza recalls the second stanza’s point of view: ultimately the poet is left to work, to create his own beautiful monument of power and finesse. In the final sentiment we see a striking
difference between the Symbolists and the Acmeists. For the Symbolists, poetic creation was a spiritual act; for the Acmeists, it was an artistic one.

Contemporaneous with the Acmeists were the Futurists, led by such lights as Vladimir Maiakovskii, Velimir Khlebnikov, and the extremely avant-garde Aleksei Kruchenykh. These poets are, perhaps, best known for their 1913 manifesto, “Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu” (“A Slap in the Face of Public Taste”), in which they called for Pushkin, Dostoevskii, and Tolstoi to be hurled off the ship of Modernity (“Brosit’ Pushkina, Dostoevskogo, Tolstogo i proch. i proch s Parokhoda sovremennosti”) (Burliuk, 1). Maiakovskii and Khlebnikov loved Pushkin, so we might understand this statement as a bit of a pose, but the intention, to shock and to open new directions in poetry, nonetheless emerges powerfully. More than any other poetic school in Russian literature, the Futurists (also Cubo-futurists and Ego-futurists) experimented with and challenged language. Putting aside Maiakovskii’s idolatry of industrialization, technology, and the attendant imagery, Khlebnikov’s “zaumnyi iazyk” (“zaum language” or “transmental tongue”), his verbal equivalent to abstract art, most saliently demonstrates this experimentation. Assigning specific colors to specific phonemes, and composing untranslatable lyrics that rely more on the reader’s tacit approval of the poet’s philosophy than any perceptible poetic sensibility, Khlebnikov left us linguistic tableaux that defy sense, that defy language, that largely defy translation. Consider the jocular “Zakliatie smekhom” (“Incantations by laughing”):

O, рассме́йтесь, смехачи!
O, засме́йтесь, смехачи!
Что смеются смехами, что смея́ствуют смея́льно,
O, засме́йте усмей́льно!
О рассмеши́щ надсмея́льных—смех усме́йных
Смея́чей!
O иссмейся рассмеяльно смех надсмейных смехей!
Смейево, Смейево,
Усмей, осмей, смешики, смешки,
Смеюнчики, смеюнчики.

O, рассме́йтесь смехачи
O, засме́йтесь, смеха́й!

O, raise a laugh, laughables!
O, begin laughing, laughables!
So far as they laugh with laughs, so far as they laff laughingly,
O, begin laughing laughing-awayly!
O the laugh-raiser of the hyperlaughable is the laugh of the
laughing-away laughies!
O laugh off laugh-raisingly a laugh of the hyperlauging laughies!
Laffing, laffing,
Laff-away, be-the-laff, laughers, laughers,
Laffers, laffers.
O, raise a laugh laughables!
O, begin laughing, laughables!

It only takes a few lines before the words stop mattering. The sounds take over and the reader has become part of the text; in the case of “Zakliatie smekhom,” the readers find themselves laughing their way through the difficult, tongue-tying lines. This is typical Khlebnikov, and, as such, typical Russian Futurism.

What emerges from the above sketch of this literary period, is that each of the principal poetic schools, be it Decadence, Symbolism, Acmeism, or Futurism, was reacting against the established Russian literary tradition. These poetic schools kept Russian literature alive, relevant, and exciting. As mentioned earlier, however, the Silver Age of Russian literature starts its decline around the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, in 1917, punctuated by the death of Aleksandr Blok in 1921. In 1932, Socialist Realism became the official school of Russian literature. The state imposed this doctrine on Russian poets and effectively shut the fonts of creativity. Poggioli explains deftly that

9 An incidental pleasantry to putting this poem into English is certainly to highlight the difficult and nonphonetic spelling of the word “laugh.”
Socialist Realism thus supplies the writer and the artist with an ideology and an aesthetics at the same time. Yet the former, although it may sometimes become a spring of faith, hardly ever turns into a source of vision. As for the latter, while determining the over-all technique of Soviet art, it seems wholly unable to inspire a sense of form. This double failure might be summed up by saying that Socialist Realism prevents the artist from attaining the very values he should constantly see, which are those Goethe once named ‘poetry’ and ‘truth.’ (282-3)

Russian literature fell off the map until after Stalin, resurrected a bit, arguably, by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. The present study primarily focuses on the Symbolist period of the Silver Age, even though, as remarked, the central object of study, Annenskii, resists such clear classification. Regardless of his elusive modernity, Annenskii stands as a force that helped shape the development of Russia’s Silver Age, particularly his influence on the Acmeist school that followed him. We must therefore turn more directly to Innokentii Annenskii, to discover who he was and why. Indeed, one cannot fully appreciate his translation of the Medea without a consideration of his upbringing, education, and his trajectory as a poet, a classicist, an educator, and a translator.

**Innokentii Fedorovich Annenskii**

Innokentii Fedorovich Annenskii was born on August 20, 1855. Although born in Omsk, Siberia, he was, for all intents and purposes, from Saint Petersburg. A high-ranking bureaucrat, Annenskii’s father’s post took brought the family to the capital in 1858, and Annenskii would call Petersburgh and its environs, especially Tsarskoe Selo (the Russian equivalent to Versailles), his home until his death in 1909. Warmth and affection marked Annenskii’s upbringing, and an environment of learning surrounded the young Innokentii. We have already seen the need to read his poems cautiously if we
want biographical insight, but his lyric poem “Sestre” (“To My Sister”) tells us a bit about his childhood household, and because of its dedication to his cousin, Aleksandra, we may assume more accuracy than in his typical poems. It is worth quoting Annenskii’s poem in full, as it not only gives us some biographical information, but taken as a whole, certain keys reveal themselves, suggesting that he was a much happier child than was, say, Merezhkovskii, or others:

Вечер. Зеленая детская
С низким ее потолком.
Скучная книга немецкая.
Няня в очках и с чулком.

Желтый, в дешевом издании,
Будто я вижу роман...
Даже прочел бы название,
Если бы не этот туман.

Вы еще были Алиною,
С розовой думой в очках,
В платье с большой пелериной,
С серым платком на плечах...

В стул утопая коленами,
Взор я с вас не сводил,
Нежные, с тонкими венами,
Руки я ваши любил.

Слов непонятных течение
Было мне музыкой сфер...
Где ожидал столкновения
Ваших особенных р...

В медном подсвечнике сальная
Свечка у няни плывет...
Милое, тихо-печальное,
Все это в сердце живет...

(107)

Evening. The green nursery
With its low ceiling.
A boring German book.
Nanny in glasses with her stocking.

It’s as if I see a yellow novel
In a cheap edition…
I would even read the title,
Were it not for this fog.

You were still Alina,
With a rosy thought in your eyes,
In a dress with a large cape,
With a gray kerchief on your shoulders…

Sinking behind your knees on a chair,
I did not take my eyes off of you,
I loved your tender hands,
With their thin veins.

The flow of incomprehensible words
Was for me like the music of the spheres…
Where I would await the collision
Of your peculiar Rs…

Nanny’s tallow candle would float
In its copper candlestick holder…
Nice, somehow sad,
This all lives in my heart…

These lines stand in stark contrast to Merezhkovskii’s long autobiographical poem, “Starinnye oktavy,” and not just in style. Granted, the poetic impressionism of Annenskii’s poem—a style that marks all of his lyrical output—stands in direct contradiestinction from the more narrative feel of Merezhkovskii’s autobiographical lines, but in the same way that we gather from Merezhkovskii’s poema a home where the children were scared to run around and a memoir without nostalgia, Annenskii’s poem powerfully communicates his fond memories from childhood. The nostalgia of Annenskii’s poem appears most clearly in the second stanza, in which it seems that the poet peers through the mists of time to revisit his youth, with his cousin (to whom he was very close) the books on shelves, and the colors of his nursery, which so clearly stayed
with him. His attention to the smallest details (Aleksandra’s delicately veined hands, her strange pronunciations, and the copper candlestick holder) impress upon the reader the effect these things had on Annenskii. Aleksandra, too, will continue to play an important role in Annenskii’s life, as we will see below.

Innokentii Annenskii had several sisters, and he was close with none of them. It appears that Annenskii was not particularly close with his mother when he was a young boy. She is not mentioned anywhere. It is clear that, in terms of women, the boy Annenskii was closest with his cousin (Aleksandra). The relationship between Innokentii Fedorovich and his father might have developed into something very tender, as evidenced by his poem, “Daleko…daleko,” in which Annenskii describes writing verses for his father. His parents, though, died when he was still young, and his brother, Nikolai and his wife—Annenskii’s cousin, Aleksandra—raised him.

Nikolai Fedorovich, Innokentii’s older brother, was a popular journalist, and after the death of their parents, he took Innokentii Fedorovich’s care into his own hands, including his younger brother’s education. Although Innokentii would not become such a politically and socially engaged man as his brother, Nikolai, very much part of the intelligentsia, left a strong impression on him:

И.Ф. держался всегда вдалеке от той партии, видным лидером которой был Н.Ф., и не без некоторого пренебрежения относился вообще к политике. Одно верно: в доме у брата И.Ф. мог прихотиться и действительно прихотился к книге и перу.
(Mitrofanov, 69)

I(nnokentii) F(edorovich) remained far from that political party, of which N(ikolai) F(edorovich) was a prominent leader, and, in general, he behaved toward politics not without a certain neglect. One thing is certain: in the home
of his brother, I.F. was able to develop, and truly did develop a taste for the book and the quill.

To whatever extent Annenskii and his brother were of a different intellectual tenor, we see clearly here an upbringing that placed heavy emphasis on learning, on intellectual exploration. Annenskii’s homeschooling clearly did not hurt him intellectually. Exactly why Nikolai homeschooled Innokentii is unclear. Whether due to Innokentii Fedorovich’s frail health (Tsybin, 6) or Nikolai’s distaste for the public school system (Setchkarev, 11), Annenskii had no trouble matriculating into the historico-philological department at the University of Petersburg, from which he graduated in 1879, the same year that he married Dina Valentinovna Khmara-Barshchevskaya. She was a widow, several years older than the 22-year-old Annenskii, and she had two children from her previous marriage. She and Annenskii would have one more child, Valentin Krivich. Krivich describes their marriage as happy, though by other accounts it seems to have been an awkward relationship. With Setchkarev, I am inclined to believe Krivich’s appraisal of the marriage. It might have been an obligatory dedication, but Annenskii tenderly devotes his 1894 translation of Euripides’ Bacchae to her: “Dine Valentinovne Annenskoi posviashchaet liubiashchii muzh” (“A loving husband dedicates [this work] to his Dina Valentinovna Annenskii”); Annenskii appears to have loved his two stepsons, and when the eldest had a child, Annenskii dedicated two poems to his new grandson; and personal correspondence reveals a great affection between Annenskii and Khmara-Barshchevskaya. Annenskii, now, with his degree in hand and a family at home, was ready to work—and work he would.

It is prudent to pause here and to say a brief word about the development of education and especially classical studies in Russia. Indeed, Annenskii is very much the
product of over a century of shifting education policies driven by autocratic paranoia and micromanaging. We will return to his university experience presently.

**Autocratic Paranoia and Russian Classical Studies**

To understand the turbid history of classical studies in late imperial Russia, one must first train on the development of education and educational policies under, essentially, the whole of 18th and 19th century tsarist rule. Governmental reforms, shifts in ideologies, and tsarist fears of revolution all played into Russia’s educational system and its vicissitudes. In fact, it is difficult to speak of education in Russia, let alone specializations in academics before these pivotal centuries. Additionally, one must understand the position of the autocracy *vis à vis* both education and a fear of threats to the Imperial system. If, as Karamzin noted, “in Russia the sovereign is the living law” (197), then we have to appreciate the concerns over its safety. We can characterize what emerges as a (prolonged) zeitgeist of paranoia that affected considerably what Russians learned.

Russia during the 18th century, a century marked by autocratic reforms of serfdom—in favor of the nobility almost exclusively—and governmental refinements (Peter’s Table of Ranks, economic reform through the 1718 poll-tax, Siberian settlement and exploration, the 1767 Legislative Commission, et al.) had not made major efforts toward expanding the educational system. Indeed, as Hugh Seton-Watson explains, “the third middle class element of European society, the secular intellectual *élite*, the forerunner of the ‘free professions’ of post-industrial society, was only just beginning to appear in Russia as the foundations of a modern system of education were laid” (29).
Unlike under, say, Catholic states, the Russian Orthodox Church did not provide much secular learning to the people, even to the aristocracy. Further, whatever learning that Constantinople transmitted to Kievan Rus’ was largely lost under the rule of the Golden Horde, the Tartar khans, whose conversion to Islam in the 14th century put Russian Christianity’s back to the wall. It would take centuries before the Christian “reconquest” was successful, and even after this period, especially marked by Ivan III’s break from the tartar yoke at the end of the 15th century, Muslim rump-states remained in Russian back pockets until 1783. During this period, Russia did not experience the European Renaissance. As Derek Offord explains it,

the Russians did not participate in the remarkable geographical exploration, scientific discovery, flowering of commerce, architecture and painting, rediscovery of classical literature, and development of scholarship, secular literary traditions, theology and philosophy which were taking place in the West in those centuries. (7)

It will take Russia centuries to catch up to her Western European siblings in terms of education and especially classical studies, resulting in the evolution of an educational system that never really stresses the Classics (in contrast to what took place in Germany and France).

Before Peter the Great, who ruled from 1689-1725, the major site of learning remained in Kiev, despite the rise of Muscovy under the Golden Horde. The Kiev Academy, established in the mid-seventeenth century, provided its priests with study in Greek and Latin religious sources. By the end of Peter’s reign, however, it seems unlikely that the Church could have remained a center of education even if it had wanted to do so. Major political moves by the autocrat, starting, at least, with the 1721 termination of the patriarchate and establishment of the Holy Synod, turned the church
into a state department. By the end of the 18th century, the Church was poor and impotent. In addition, the Church struggled to recruit new priests. To combat the disinterest of even lowly young nobles to become priests, it set up seminaries, in 1737, catering to the sons of current clergy. This provided an outlet for intellectual pursuits, but public secular education was finally rolling. Seminary interest continued to drop.

Secular education in Russia owes its origins to Peter the Great, but his primary concerns centered on technical training. Peter desired to improve the military and governmental administration (we shall see this focus on the bureaucracy again in Nicholas I’s reign). This first attempt, however, “to create a State system of education for all classes was quite unsuccessful. The whole scheme was designed solely for the utilitarian purpose of furnishing educated officials for various Departments” (Hans, 11). Peter’s efforts, despite the goals, were significant and necessary first steps. He founded a Marine Academy and a system of mining schools; he also shipped young nobles abroad to bring back essential European skills. Peter’s ambitions were perhaps greater than the man, for while he wanted a university in St. Petersburg as part of the Academy of Sciences, Russia’s first university did not open until 1755, in Moscow, under Elizabeth (r. 1741-1761). Tsars, Tsarinas, luminaries, and bureaucrats came and went over the next one hundred years. Reform successes and failures took place. What follows is a very condensed exposition on Russian educational development. The topic is hugely complex,

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10 Peter’s distaste, or, better, indifference and distrust of religion finds its first significant trace in 1700. Upon the death of Patriarch Adrian, Peter made no move to replace him, and the church appointed Stefan Yavorskii as “keeper and administrator of the Patriarchal See.” After Yavorskii, a student of the Kiev Academy, died, he was replaced by Theophan Prokopovich, also a student from Kiev, who believed the Church was not a political body, and should keep its nose out of state affairs. This surely laid the groundwork for Peter’s subsequent consumption of the Church as an independent body.
of course, but we endeavor here to establish how Innokentii Annenskii and his translations were, in part, a product of the slow arrival of classical studies in the Empire.

Once Catherine the Great (r. 1762-1796) implemented the Austrian Trivialschulen model (a tripartite organization of school levels overseen by a provincial educational commission), Russia became only the third European country, behind Austria and Prussia, to place the burden of education in the government’s hands. Scholars remain somewhat split on the motivations behind Catherine’s progressive moves. Marcus Levitt suggests that “Catherine’s program of conspicuous political and intellectual toleration seemed calculated in part to highlight the contrast between Russia and France under Louis XV” (55), but it seems more likely that her Prussian blood and upbringing (and therefore her own education, which included Racine, Corneille, and Moliere) had more to do with her policy. The initial curriculum included Latin, but not Greek. The curriculum with Latin but no Greek studies appears in the contemporary novel, A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow, by Aleksandr Radishchev. Chatting with a young man with whom he shares a bench, the narrator learns about the shortcomings of Russian classical training. The young man reports,

We still need a great deal of aid to learning in our country...The knowledge of Latin alone cannot satisfy a mind hungry for learning. Virgil, Horace, Livy, even Tacitus I know almost by heart, but when I compare the information of my fellow seminarists with what I have had the good luck to learn, I see that our school belongs in a bygone age. We know all the classical authors, but we know more of the critical interpretation of their texts than of what still makes them so appealing today, and promises them eternal life. (78)

Although Radishchev knew his ancient authors and quotes from them frequently, this passage nevertheless illustrates that Classics was, as a field, behind in late 18th century
Russia. In fact, we cannot overlook that “Latin and foreign language were only taught to intending students of higher schools, i.e. of the Gymnasia and Universities” (Hans 25). These students received between two and four hours of instruction in Latin per week.

The problem Russia faced, which greatly affected the development of classical studies in the Russian Empire, grew out of Catherine’s bottom-up policy on educational reform. Her early emphasis on solving the primary and secondary school problems resulted in a certain neglect of the university system and the gymnasia. Catherine’s approach was not necessarily a poor one, but it did open the “University Question” of the late 18th century. The problem at Russian universities was not at all one of neglect only, for

the greatest obstacle may yet have been overlooked—the lack of university teachers. Since Russian had become the language of instruction, this problem had become almost insurmountable. When the deliberations on the university plan began, in spring 1786, Zavadovsky turned to the Academy of St. Petersburg and the University of Moscow for professors who could staff the new universities. Princess Dashkova, the Director of the Academy, informed the Commission, that ‘among the Russian academicians there is not a single one willing to teach at the new universities.’ The Curator of the University of Moscow, I. I. Shuvalov, had a similar reply, but he was willing ‘to prepare several students as professors.’ Thus, the new universities would have had to rely on foreign non-Russian speaking professors. This would have been equal to a public confession to western Europe that progress in Russia was much slower than was generally believed in the West. (Epp, 127-8)

The gymnasia, which should have had a natural connector between the major schools and the universities, were not, on the whole, fulfilling their obligations either. Although some talks were on the table to do away with the flagging gymnasia, Catherine did not close the programs, and this was both good and prescient, for the gymnasia would come
to play both a significant and quality role in Russian education in general, and classical studies in particular.

The Russian poet F. Tiutchev, in his 1848 essay, “La Russie at la Révolution” observes: “depuis longtemps il n’y a plus en Europe que deux puissances réelles : « la Révolution et la Russie ».— Ces deux puissances sont maintenant en présence, et demain peut-être, elles seront aux prises. Entre l’un et l’autre il n’y a ni traité, ni transaction possibles. La vie de l’une est la mort de l’autre” (Tiutchev, 344) [“for a long time there have only been two real powers in Europe: Revolution and Russia. These two powers are present now, and perhaps they will be grappled with tomorrow. There will be neither treaty nor transaction between the two. The life of one is the death of the other”]. The constant concern of Russian autocrats over when rebellion would come—a fear ossified in particular by the Decembrist Uprising of 1825—dictated much education policy, for what Russians learned might inculcate dissent.

However much Catherine transformed Petrine policy and developed a system and philosophy of education, “these beginnings were so radically altered by Aleksandr I and extended to such dimensions that we may rightly regard him as the builder of the Russian national school system” (Hans, 35). The marriage of Aleksandr’s liberal, even democratic leanings, and the 1792 pedagogical treatises of the Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794) helped to shape Russia’s school system into the 20th century.

The biggest obstacle of Aleksandr’s reign in terms of educational reform was Russia’s commitments in the Napoleonic Wars, which effectively took the Tsar’s attention away from most everything except his role as a major player in the conflicts, twice bringing Russian troops into Paris. Nonetheless, Condorcet’s goal was to provide
equality and utility in the curriculum. The Marquis’ “equality,” on the one hand, appealed to Aleksandr, for, upon his accession, whispers of a constitution, of democratization, and of liberation of the serfs hung on his lips. Part of Condorcet’s “utility,” on the other hand, included the rejection of a strictly classical education. Aleksandr agreed. How could classical studies and scholarship survive, though, if kept in dark corners? As under Catherine, Latin was reserved for, essentially, college-prep students, and Greek does not appear in the State’s curriculum. Some Russians learned Greek at Classical Gymnasia and under private instruction, but most Russians did not have access to a real classical education until they reached the university. Under the Statutes of 1804, the university level faculty of “Literature and Art” included offerings in both “Latin and antiquities” and “Greek.” During this same period, at the minor and major schools, “Latin which was predominant in the Polish and German schools had taken a secondary place and was replaced by such subjects as Statistics, Technology and Commerce. That is a direct influence of Condorcet’s scheme and its utilitarian aims” (Hans 50-1).

Aleksandr, though, did continue to make education a state responsibility, establishing what amounts to a financial aid and awards office. Aleksandr required gymnasias to admit a certain number of poor and capable children, and in 1804, the government even funded ten students of philology at Dorpat University at 300 rubles/year/student. In addition, Aleksandr founded the lyceum at Tsarskoe Selo, which famously schooled Aleksandr Pushkin, Anna Akhmatova, and many others; Annenskii was a teacher at the lyceum.
On the other hand, Admiral Shishkov, the Minister of Education under Aleksandr I, fostered the anti-intellectualism running through Russia at the time. Shishkov’s policies were frightening. Not only did his department stifle university life in extremis, but his department was also responsible for censorship. Admiral Shishkov believed firmly in the moral rectitude that good (that is, “thorough”) censorship would produce. Imagine the development of classical scholars under a system that looked “not only to prevent noxious material from publication, but to improve the literary quality of what was written” (Seton-Watson, 170-1). Shishkov, while a burden to scholars and learning, does not overshadow the good steps that Aleksandr took during his twenty-four years as Tsar. What progress Aleksandr I made, however, came to an abrupt halt with his death in 1825.

Nicholas I (r. 1825-1855) is now Tsar. His first day on the throne was a disaster. His paranoia over revolution will drive many decisions in curbing classical studies. While the development of education under Nicholas I largely stagnates, especially for classical studies, simultaneously much of the material foundations of Russian education were set up during Nicholas’ rule. As Seton-Watson observes, “during the reign of Nicholas I the system of public education in Russia made considerable quantitative progress, though the policies which inspired it can hardly be qualified as ‘progressive’” (218).

While Radishchev may have outwardly attacked the meager classical education available under Catherine, and while certain curricular initiatives limited students’ exposure to Greek and Latin before Nicholas’ reign, under Nicholas we see moments of outright aggression against Classics. This aggression relates directly to the Tsar’s fear of
revolt. Like any good, self-preserving autocrat reeling from a foiled rebellion (the Decembrist uprising), Nicholas, at the urging of his advisors, went after the schools. It was generally well accepted that the educational system bred sedition, and many close to Nicholas called for the closing of certain schools and universities, including the Imperial Lyceum at Tsarskoe Selo (which Innokentii Annenskii will one day head) and Kazan University (not the best in Russia, but one of only six universities in the empire at this time). These institutions did not shut down *en masse*, but the government took steps to limit access to them. The lower classes, of course, were the primary target. Such segregation, it was thought, would keep the poor from gaining access to knowledge and thus an understanding of their true station. Count Lieven, Nicholas’ Minister of Education starting in 1828, argued that this class-based school system would not work in Russia, where social mobility and state service were so interdependent. The compromise was, basically, a track-system, in which, based on one’s future position in the empire, one enrolled in specific schools. The idea was to prevent pupils from working too hard at rising above their station. The University admitted qualified candidates from all free classes, including emancipated serfs. In a supplement to the *Conversations-Lexicon der Gegenwart*, one learns that

in 1836 practical schools for agriculture and trade were opened, and in five Imperial universities the Government founded agricultural lectureships. These measures were, however, by no means intended to raise the intelligence of the labouring classes above a certain point. On the contrary, a remarkable edict of the 21st May, 1837, requires stricter attention to the previous laws, which restrained the serfs to an education in the inferior district and parochial schools, but forbade their admission to the practical schools or to those of the higher sciences, because this would be a dangerous mixture of different classes, and would produce
a too glaring contrast between their civic rights and intellectual powers. (Sterling, 39-40)

The appointment of Count Uvarov, a classical scholar and historian, to the Ministry of Education in 1833, would spell a short renaissance in the classics for Russians, but this would be a tough period for the new Minister and for classical studies in the empire. Uvarov, who had been part of the Arzamas literary circle with Karamzin and Pushkin, believed in a classical education, and he fought well against the anti-intellectual climate held over from Aleksandr and Shishkov, actively sending students to study abroad “in the hope that they would return and help to raise higher education in Russia out of the slough into which it had sunk” (Crankshaw, 89). In addition to sending students to Western Europe, Uvarov sought to improve education at the university level, too. He sent Russian professors abroad on the State’s dime: these selected scholars had to commit to a minimum of twelve years of service to Russian education upon their return (Seton-Watson, 225). Such programs, especially the sending of professors (a sort of professional development) and students to Europe, ameliorated Russian intellectual life greatly, and “the Russian intellectual élite belonged to the contemporary European culture. They were the equals of the graduates of Paris or Oxford” (Seton-Watson 225).

In 1849, Uvarov lost his post at the Ministry of Education. His replacement, the sycophantic Count Shirinskii-Shikhmatov, who happily kotowed to the Tsar’s every concern, oversaw one of the biggest hits to classical studies in imperial Russia. Revolution remained on the autocracy’s mind, and

Russian conservatives noted that Latin and Greek were the languages of the Republicans, that French eighteenth-century Revolutionaries had cited Cicero and Plato. For Nicholas I, this kind of argument was sufficient to justify measures taking against what he regarded as a potential threat to his autocracy. Thus, in
1849, he ordered that instruction in Latin and Greek be reduced considerably, and between 1851 and 1854, Greek was suppressed outright. (Riasanovsky, 1976, 23-4)

Classical studies are all but dead in Russia until the appointment of Dmitrii Tolstoi to the Ministry of Education in 1864.

The societal état des choses under Nicholas I Education greatly impacted and limited those elements of the educational system that would later foster Classics in Russia. Recall that a decidedly anti-intellectual air permeated Russia, beginning in Aleksandr I’s reign and continuing well into Nicholas’. As Bruce Lincoln describes it, the University of Moscow cadre faced the very frustrating dilemma of living in a society which generally provided no justification for intellectuals per se. For it was not enough to be a thinker...it was also necessary to serve in order to be considered worthwhile in the Russia of Nicholas, and so professors in the university served the state (holding civil service rank), and many writers of belles-lettres and criticism served in the bureaucracy at some point in their careers. (257)

How can a rigorous academic system, let alone an area as specialized as Classics, evolve if intellectuals are outsiders and professors are reduced to functionaries?

Nicholas I’s censorship and oppression of ideas, including the suppression of Plato and Tacitus, had a very real effect on classical studies, clearly. Nicholas had created a dozen agencies by 1850 to deal with censorship. Aleksandr Nikitenko described this move against free thought as “krestovyi pokhod protiv nauki” (326) [“a Crusade against scholarship”]. Indeed, for fear of filling the minds of the people with governmental discontent, the classical world itself was attacked beyond just the aforementioned death of Greek in schools. One of the many censors working in the 1850s, A. I. Mekhelin, “devoted considerable effort to removing all references to the
words ‘republic’ and ‘republicanism’ from earlier studies of Ancient Greece and Rome” (Lincoln, 321). Imagine an academic discussion of Cicero in which “Republic” cannot appear.

The Crimean War debacle took a heavy toll on Nicholas, as well as the empire. The Tsar died on March 2, 1855. He died of the flu. The Tsar’s “reign ended in unrelieved gloom: all that he had thought he had achieved in thirty years seemed on the point of collapse” (Seton-Watson, 327). Aleksandr II inherited both the throne and the Crimean War, and, in terms of education, Nicholas had bequeathed to his son the dead Uvarov System and severely crippled classical studies.

Aleksandr II (r. 1855-1881) was full of conservative ideas, including a fastidious belief in the autocracy. At the same time, we might characterize aspects of Aleksandr’s rule as very progressive. In addition, classical studies flourished in Russia for the first time under the compassionate and worldly Tsar. Aleksandr understood, following defeat in the Crimean War, that “Russia needed a literate populace, scientists, engineers, teachers, technicians, administrators—and not devout Christians” (Sinel, 23). When discussing Aleksandr II, historians focus on the freeing of the serfs, and this surely stands as the greatest advance to take place during the “Great Reforms” of Nicholas I’s successor. Under Aleksandr II, everything in Russia would change, from the top down.

The “Great Reforms” of the 1860s included major changes in education, and for us, these changes in Russian learning came at a most convenient time: born in 1856, Innokentii Annenskii was thus the beneficiary of a new era, and a new attitude toward Classics.
To say that classical studies flourished during this time is not inaccurate, but let us not forget that Aleksandr, however exalted by his title “The Great Reformer,” “was an unpredictable mixture of stubbornness and feebleness, boldness and timidity, enlightenment and obscurantism” (Crankshaw, 152). We thus see a familiar paranoia in the new Tsar, who saw the autocracy as a necessity. As we have seen, the preservation of the throne often comes at the expense of educational progress. In the case of Aleksandr II’s reign, however, we see a more complex approach, marked by trial, error, assassination attempt, and refinement.

Thus among the “Great Reforms,” which included the emancipation of serfs, changes in the judicial affairs of the empire, and shifts in censorship (to wit, the responsibility of censorship leaves the Ministry of Education), we find the University Statute of 1863 and other changes in the educational system. The University Statute of 1863 came in response to riots and unrest of seething professors and students at various universities throughout Russia. The unrest was not, to Aleksandr’s pleasure, politically charged, but rather had more to do with dissatisfaction over the way the government ran the universities. Complicating the desire to make changes to Russia’s university system was instability and inexperience in the Ministry of Education. Between 1858 and 1863, the Ministry saw three separate directors. None of these men had studied at the University. The University Statute of 1863 greatly increased autonomy within the University. This new found autonomy, taken with an influx of bright, young, natively educated professors, boosted the élan vital of the University and the life of the intellectuals. The Statute had its problems and was not without some threat to the Tsar, but it “gave Russian professors no less academic freedom than their counterparts in the
U.S. universities, no more reason to complain about overcentralization and government interference than their counterparts in France’ (Kassow, 249). This new system, however, introduced new problems in Russian higher education. With their new freedoms, as Samuel Kassow observes,

institutionally and intellectually the universities challenged the Russian government to rethink its relationship to societal institutions. The government for the most part failed that challenge. (249)

Meanwhile the gymnasium in the empire prepared to produce a new generation of pseudo-classicists. The curriculum at the gymnasium would fall one of two categories: classical or modern. The modern gymnasium focused on the sciences and technical arts, with a desired effect, basically, of vocational training. In contrast, each of the classical gymnasium required the study of Latin, and some re-introduced Greek. The classical gymnasium, in fact, focused on classics and modern European languages.

As suggested, such changes do not come without conflict. The bureaucratic autocracy still expected qualified and loyal servants to pour out of the University and into state desks. The professors, on the other hand, were not satisfied to be professional teachers and amateur researchers. Professors wanted to pursue scholarship without the burden of remediating the basic skills required of would-be governmental clerk, a feeling that many in the 21st century professoriate can likely appreciate. Despite student discontent and governmental concern, Russian university professors enjoyed their new position for several years, until the appointment in 1866 of Dmitrii Tolstoi to the Ministry of Education.

No single person in Russian history more influenced the development of classical studies than the Tsarskoe Selo Lyceum graduate, Dmitrii Tolstoi, a man “uniformly hated
by educated Russians of liberal or radical outlook” (Seton-Watson, 380). However unpleasant and however bigoted Tolstoi may have been, the man bore Russian classical studies with his educational policies, and these specific policies educated Annenskii and his Silver Age contemporaries. We know that Annenskii was home-schooled. Whether due to his frail health or his guardian/brother’s distaste for Russian public schools, one cannot be sure. Even though he was educated at home, Annenskii’s education does reflect the classical gymnasium’s curriculum, and he later enrolled at St. Petersburg University in Comparative Philology. The basic idea behind Tolstoi’s nearly fetishistic emphasis on a classical system of education was that, first, “for the teacher, classical studies...[introduced] the student to the ancient world—the height of man’s achievement and the foundation of the present civilization” (Sinel, 131). Second, “Tolstoi considered education mainly a process of developing mental discipline and the two ancient languages, because of their ordered yet complex structure, were the best subjects with which to exercise the brain” (Sinel, 144). Strangely, Tolstoi did not himself benefit from a classical education, but he had advisors who had, and his philologically trained advisors influenced the Minister’s decisions.

What emerges from this development is a flip from the arguments levied against the Uvarov System (viz. teaching classics might instill revolutionary ideas) to this new Tolstoi-focus that kept students too busy to get fancy ideas about overthrowing the government. As Christine Ruane puts it, “conservatives hoped to keep students so busy parsing and translating classical works that they would have no time for student activism. In fact, over 62 percent of class time in the gymnasiums was spent studying Greek and Latin” (53). This is certainly a back-door tactic to hinder student thought, but one can
appreciate it while condemning the practice. It was, after all, an ex-student, Dmitrii Karakozov, formerly of Kazan University, who tried to assassinate the Tsar in 1866. The attempt on Aleksandr’s life (which may have prompted the placement of Tolstoi as Minister of Education) was the watershed moment that really shook Aleksandr: “in face of deliberate regicide the Tsar was forced to concede that those who had counselled [sic] repressive action had been right” (Crankshaw, 196). Perhaps 1863’s University Statute created worse problems that those it had solved.

Anyone, however, who believed (and who still believes) in the merits of a classical education would take issue with the true project behind Tolstoi’s Classical System. The Minister’s plan to make students worry more about the aorist and substantive clauses of result than the repressive nature of Aleksandr II’s regime did not stop at the grammar and slide-rule. Indeed,

in Tolstoi’s scheme the main purpose of education was the disciplining of the mind, and lessons on vague themes like the meaning of literature or history, while more exciting that those of grammar or algebra, did not train the young intellect nearly so well. (Sinel, 173).

The upshot of the Tolstoi System was that Russian secondary education produced grammarians; but is a young pedant necessarily a good classicist? Allen Sinel explains that language study took up more than 60% of a student’s weekly lesson plan, and even the “modern language instructors focused on the linguistic rather than the literary aspects of their subjects. If their students could read and write adequately in a foreign tongue, the course was a success” (175). This makes for pretty dull education, and without a passion for a subject, it is a tall order to ask a young man to become a specialist for the rest of his life. Either way, though, Russians were finally immersed in classical studies.
Further, the students of this generation were of two types: university-bound or technical-institute-bound. Only students attending classical gymnasia could enter the University.

Do not forget Tiutchev. There is Russia and there is revolution. Disaster struck the autocracy in 1881. After various assassination attempts, some of which Aleksandr barely escaped, and most all of which historians regard as acts of terrorism, the government was put on high alert. Following a series of events that truly are the stuff of Hollywood, a terrorist succeeded, killing Aleksandr II by, essentially, a suicide-bomb. The Tsar was dead. Aleksandr III took the throne.

Tsar Aleksandr III (r. 1881-1894) appointed Aleksandr Saburov as his Minister of Education. Saburov, pushed for the new University Statute, ending the brief period of university liberalization. What follows is known as the Counter Reform of 1884. The preceding historical sketch should suggest that the Counter Reform resulted in the undoing of classical scholarship in Russia, given the trend of Greco-Roman ebb and flow, but the opposite occurred. While Saburov reignited the debate to reform the University Statute of 1863, his position at the Ministry of Education was short lived. His successor, Ivan Delyanov, who took the post in 1882, pushed the hardest and looked to continue the work of Tolstoi. What comes of the Counter Reform of 1884, then, is a major reinvestment in classical studies at the University. Classical philology, in fact, now dominated the university curriculum:

11 Historians universally regard the anti-Tsarists and would-be assassins as terrorists because of their tactics. After several failed shootings, the conspirators took to public and suicide bombings. The hope, constantly, was to get Aleksandr, but the collateral damage from these attempts, some abortive, others intricately planned, most always included passers-by and/or people from the Tsar’s entourage.
12 Although more discussion of Annenskii’s life, personal, poetic, and professional follows in subsequent chapters, it is worth noting here that during this period (the years following 1879), Annenskii was teaching Russian and Greek. Although he was teaching at private schools, his teaching load was fifty-six hours per week; he still managed to produce some scholarship, and he began developing some of his pedagogical ideas that would serve him years later as director at Tsarskoe Selo Lyceum.
this move formed part of an announced programme to increase the number of teachers of Latin and Greek in Russia’s gymnasia. But, underlying this policy was an ideologized, and possibly rather naive, conception of classical scholarship itself. Because of the intellectual demands it put on the pupil, and because its content was so far removed from contemporary reality, the authors of these more conservative measures...believed it might provide the much needed panacea to social unrest. (Nethercott, 24)

This did more, though, than just train future Latin teachers, as this period also saw a major jump in true classical scholarship and research. This period, of course, produced the classicist-poets of the Silver Age, such as Annenskii and Vyacheslav Ivanov, but it also gave the world the scholars Fadeii Zelinskii, Ernest Shtern, and Vasilii Latyshev.

Virtually every poet of Russia’s Silver Age, and certainly the Symbolists (both generations), came out of the Tolstoi System of classical education. Although Innokentii Annenskii was educated at home, he enrolled at St. Petersburg University in Comparative Philology, whereupon he wrote an award-winning dissertation in 1879; similarly, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii graduated from St. Petersburg University in History and Philology. Vyacheslav Ivanov studied in the department of History and Philology at Moscow University before heading to the University of Berlin for Mommsen’s seminar on Roman History. Ivanov, in fact, was so much a product of the Tolstoi System, he remains “arguably one of the most prominent authorities in classics in the Russian Silver Age, [and] he was regarded by many, with a mixture of bewilderment and admiration as the Hellenic spirit incarnate” (Rudich, 275). Classics and several classicists played significant roles in Russian Symbolism, and, considering the turbulent history of classical

13 While he took a very influential trip to Italy in 1890, Annenskii is the only of these men mentioned who did not either study abroad (Ivanov studied under Mommsen in Berlin and Shtern studied at both Leipzig and Dorpat, for example) or leave Russia altogether. Had Annenskii lived so long a life as Ivanov, however, who knows? Many Russian poets eventually left Russia after the realities of the Bolshevik Revolution took hold.
studies in Russia, as well as the directed study by the symbolist poets of Greek and Latin, this should come as no surprise. Further, when one considers the presence of Nietzsche’s work in Russia at this time, and the very fin de siècle moment at which Symbolism emerged, one perhaps finds the only possibility to rest in classical themes and motives, and without a solid foundation in the ancient world, these themes certainly would have been less purposefully employed. In fact, the classical world not only had a profound influence on the poetic projects of many of the Symbolists, but for some of them, such as Ivanov and Annenskii, it was their career, too.

**Annenskii: Doctus Poeta**

Annenskii’s university studies focused on Comparative Philology, with a focus on Classical and Slavic Philology. Among the professors who most influenced and inspired Annenskii at the University of Petersburg were Dmitirii Minaev, a Sanskritologist, and Vladimir Lamanskii, who studied Slavo-Greek philology. Annenskii found himself in excellent company to learn, and to learn to love language. Annenskii had studied some fourteen languages, including Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Hebrew, French, German, English, Italian, and several Slavic tongues. Annenskii was not a specialist in all of these languages, clearly, but he had an unquestionable knack for language, including his own. His dissertation, on South-Russian songs, for which he won a gold medal, demonstrates that he was specialist in Russian language, and his first job out of the University was teaching Russian and ancient languages at the Bychkov Gymnasium; he also lectured on the history of Russian language on the side. Unlike some of his Silver Age contemporaries, Annenskii did not receive income from a wealthy father, and so he had
to work especially hard to make ends meet. Mitrofanov explains that “I. F. v nachale ego kar’ery prikhodilos’ davat’ do 56 urokov v nedeliu” (“at the beginning of his career, I.F. had to give up to 56 lessons in a week,” 71). This kind of teaching load is unthinkable today, particularly when one factors in the hours spent on preparation and grading. Remarkably, despite what must have amounted to at least a seventy-hour work week, and with a new baby at home (Krivich was born in 1880), Annenskii managed to publish articles and reviews during his early career. Most of these early publications focused on pedagogy. Indeed, Annenskii published widely on pedagogical issues throughout his life. A career educator, publishing reviews of teaching materials and writing on teaching were part of his job description.

As for so many, travel shaped Annenskii’s worldview. We have limited records of trips he took, but certain of his poems indicate that he had travelled to Paris and other European cities. We do have definitive record (diary entries and letters) of his journey to Italy, in 1890. This voyage, during which he visited Rome, Venice, Florence, Bologna, Sorrento, and other destinations, had a profound influence on Annenskii, and in his diary we find one of the first references to Annenskii’s interest in Euripides. Even these early, informal compositions demonstrate the impressionism of all his writings.

Annenskii held various posts at various schools during the first decade of his career,14 and his publication of articles and reviews never abated, even as his career advanced. Eventually he went into semi-retirement, accepting the position of district

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14 From 1879-1890, he taught, as mentioned, at the Bychkov Gymnasium in St. Petersburg; from 1891-1893, Annenskii was director at the Pavel Galagan College, in Kiev; from 1893-1896, he was director at the 8th Gymnasium, St. Petersburg (a combo high school and middle school); from 1896-1906, he was director at the Gymnasium of the Emperor Nicholas at Tsarskoe Selo. In 1906, he was appointed district inspector for St. Petersburg schools (which included Tsarskoe Selo). He held this final position until his death (1909).
inspector for the Petersburg school district, so that he could focus more on his writing. To explain Annenskii more fully, I draw a sharp contrast between him and Dmitrii Merezhkovskii: Merezhkovskii’s life was marked by dramatically different periods, life events, major developments in philosophy, and relatively frequent changes in location; a stable career, a stable home, and a very consistent writing style punctuate Annenskii’s life. This stability may account for the general lack of interest in the man’s life, or it may explain why less is known—compared to Merezhkovskii, Annenskii went nowhere, and his life was decidedly less dramatic. But this stability permitted him to write, to write a lot, and to have a successful teaching, academic, and poetic career.

Annenskii’s writing is always impressionistic, subjective, and insightful. Annenskii’s bibliography runs to some 400 entries, mostly reviews, but with no shortage of critical essays; this is, of course, in addition to his two collections of poetry (one of which appeared posthumously), his complete Euripides, his translation of Bachylides, four original tragedies, and translations from other modern poets. These figures seem to fly in the face of Kelly’s position that “authorship occupied a small part of his time” (1985, 9) because of his intense professional duties. The majority of Annenskii’s writings are unavailable in collected form, for while many appeared in the Zhurnal Ministverstva Narodnogo Prosveschhenia (the official journal of the Scholarly Committee for Popular Education), still more were simply stored in the Ministry’s archives; scarcely any of Annenskii’s writing appears in English translation.

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15 Scholars have generally ignored these archival works. In 1993, A. I. Cherviakov published one of Annenskii’s reviews, on Bal’mont’s translation of Shelly, in Slavonic and East European Review, but surprisingly this publication has not sparked more of the same archival work.

16 Further hindering Annenskii studies is the general unavailability of most of the journals in which Annenskii published his articles and reviews.
For our purposes, the most important of Annenskii’s publications are his translations of Euripides, and we will discuss these presently. First, though, it is useful to survey his other major publications. We will focus, here, on his creative output, for he is, justly or not, generally known as a poet first and foremost.

Critics generally judge Annenskii’s poetry to be of very high quality, even if, as Evelyn Bristol suggests, “it is all of a piece” (1985, 22). As mentioned above, Annenskii was a latecomer onto the literary scene in Russia. His place in Russian literary history is no longer in question, but we have to question whether he sought this status. His first book of poetry, Tikhie pesni (Quiet Songs, 1904), was published under the Odyssean pseudonym Nik. T-O. (“No one”), and his second collection of verse, Kiparisovyi Larets (The Cypress Chest, 1910), was published posthumously, though he had already approved the manuscript. The poems in these two collections are first-rate and the critical literature discusses them at length. Annenskii’s poetry, as I have noted, is highly impressionistic, using juxtaposition of opposites, color, personification, and dreamscapes. Marc Slonim, in describing Kiparisovyi Larets, notes that it is “a collection of highly subjective and original poems of enchanting, filigreed craftsmanship” (101). Avril Pyman adds, “there is a kind of stark simplicity in Annenskii’s monotone, civilized interiors—which come as a relief after the cosmic dynamics of mature [i.e., younger] Symbolism” (328). Consider Annenskii’s poem, “Utro” (“Morning”), from Tikhie pesni:

17 Recall that the symbolist poets are divided into two groups—the elder and the younger symbolists. The “elder” symbolists were the early poets (Merezhkovskii, Bal’mont, Briusov) of the 1890s. The “younger” symbolists (“mature” insofar as Symbolism continued to develop) were the second generation, with such lights as Ivanov, Bely, and Blok. It is not age, but rather chronology; thus the younger symbolists were the more “mature” (to clarify Slonim’s term).
Эта ночь бесконечна была,
Я не смел, я боялся уснуть:
Два мучительно-черных крыла
Тяжело мне ложились на грудь

На призывы ж тех крыльев в ответ
Трепетал, замирая, птенец,
И не знал я, придет ли рассвет,
Или это уж полный конец...

О смелее...Кошмар позади,
Его страшное царство прошло;
Вещих птиц на груди и в груди
Отшумело до завтра крыло...

Облака еще плачут, гудя,
Но светлеет и нехотя тень,
И банальный, за сетью дождя,
Улыбнуться попробовал День.

That night was infinite,
I did not dare, I was afraid to fall asleep:
Two painfully black wings
Lay heavily on my chest.

In reply to the calls of those wings,
I quivered, standing motionless, a nestling,
And I did not know whether dawn would come,
Or whether this was already the full end…

O, more boldly…The nightmare behind me,
Its frightening rule was over;
The wing of prophetic birds on my chest
And in my chest, made noise until morning.

The clouds still weep, humming,
But the shadow reluctantly brightens,
And, behind a net of rain,
A banal Day tries to smile.

This poem typifies Annenskii’s poetic work, and taken as a whole, as Maria Rubins
argues, “Annenskii’s entire body of verse is an enormous discourse on the limitations of
earthly existence; the lyric persona’s existential fear often leads him to seek eternity
though the creative process” (148). The care Annenskii took in composing his poems at times manifests itself in his metapoetry.

In “Poètu” (“To the Poet”), “Annenskij focuses on the importance of clarity and concreteness, juxtaposing them to abstraction and indefiniteness, and expressing aesthetic views that the Acmeists would later espouse” (Tucker, 34). This poem is nothing short of a verse statement on Annenskii’s own creative process, but it reveals that his process is imbued with the same impressionism as its product. The final stanza of “Poètu” reads:

Люби раздельность и лучи
В рожденном ими аромате.
Ты чаши яркие точки
Для целокупных восприятий.

(168)

Love clarity and rays
In the aroma born by them.
Hone bright goblets
For integral perceptions.

The power of contrast stands out even in this one stanza, which addresses the would-be poet. Clarity is paramount, but only insofar as it creates perception, a purely subjective experience. With these lines in mind, it is not a surprise that Annenskii considered his literary criticism a “reflection” (“otrazhenie”). Such poetic thematics, though, have posed problems for critics. We have already seen in this chapter that Annenskii was “homeless” in Russian Modernism, not fitting into any of the major poetic schools of the Silver Age. Whatever the shortcomings in Setchkarev’s biographical sketch of Annenskii, his observations on the poetry provide much insight. Regardless, Setchkarev only confirms that Annenskii does not neatly fit into any Silver Age mold, a situation that other critics reinforce, even though many scholars have tried to define his poetics. It seems that any attempt to categorize Annenskii only proves his elusiveness.
Further, *Tikhie pesni* is an interesting and illustrative document, and not simply because the poet saw fit to hide his identity. Not only does the collection contain fifty three original compositions, but it also includes nearly fifty translations. We can see the size of his lyrical output as one of the remarkable aspects of Annenskii’s poetry, but one that few critics acknowledge. The entirety of Annenskii’s poetic corpus only comprises about one hundred poems. In his *Knigi Otrazhenii* (*Books of Reflections, 1906 and 1909*), two collections of critical essays, Annenskii explains, in a wonderful pre-Barthesian move, that “samoe chtenie poèta est’ uzhe tvorchestvo” (“the very act of reading a poet is already creative activity”, iii). As such, we might double the size of his creative output, for, as Adrian Wanner states,

The process of translation is for Annenskii not the simple reproduction of an original. He willfully distorts the original in order to convey to his text the status of an independent work of art…In a way, all of Annenskii’s translations belong to the corpus of his own poetry. (103)

Translation for Annenskii, like reading, was a creative act. Clearly, then, we cannot overemphasize the role of translation in Annenskii’s work, though stunningly most scholars have underestimated its place in Annenskii. Further, Annenskii’s decision to place the translations alongside his own original poems points up the need to consider his translation (and not just the translation of lyric) as integral to his œuvre. We can discover in his translations a heightened intertextuality, perhaps, but also a clearer picture of what he was as a poet. We will discuss all this more below, but leaving aside the reviews he wrote in his official capacity as a teacher and school director, we ought to view his translations, both of modern and ancient poetry, as well as his *Teatr Evripida* (*Theater of Euripides*), as the most significant part of his œuvre.
Much of the scholarship on Annenskii focuses on his poetry, the majority of which is concerned with directed, almost pedantic analyses of the minutiae of his verse. Setchkarev devotes nearly six pages to Annenskii’s “colorism,” providing statistical analyses of the appearance of various colors in the poems (134-140); Janet Tucker spends a chapter of her monograph poring over the six major themes she identifies in Annenskii’s poetry (23-49); in her *At the Crossroads of Russian Modernism: Studies in Innokentij Annenskii’s Poetics*, Anna Ljunggren gives an extensive analysis of lexical items of note in his poetry, particularly Gallicisms (51-62). In short, much has been made of Annenskii’s diction, his poetic devices, and scholars have made extensive efforts to reduce his poetry to basic themes and the hierarchy of these themes. Such studies as these are very useful, and I would not argue that they do not have a place in the scholarship, but the exegetical nature of the majority of Annenskii criticism comes at a cost: we have plenty of close readings of his poems, and these provide us with an excellent foundation for future research on his creative writings, but we have very few studies of his other work, especially his translations.

Perhaps this shortage of criticism on his translations results from the interest scholars have shown for his four original tragedies, all of which are based on fragments from lost Greek plays: *Melanippa-Filosof* (*Melanipe the Wise*, 1901), *Tsar Iksion* (*King Ixion*, 1902), *Laodamia* (completed in 1902, published in 1906), and *Famira-Kifared* (*Thamyras the Cithara Player*, finished in 1906, published in 1913). *Famira-Kifared* is the only of Annenskii’s plays to be staged (1916). Because other Silver Age poets also wrote original tragedies, including Bal’mont and Ivanov, it stands to reason that scholars

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18 Tucker remarks that “the themes of death, life, dream, and nature are actually subordinate to that of time, which binds them all together” (23).
would study the plays. Setchkarev spends the better part of one of his chapters on them and George Kalbouss (1982) provides an extended treatment; Kelly discusses them thoroughly (1985) and she also wrote an article about Famira-Kifared (1985). Many general studies of the Silver Age devote space to the plays (usually no more than a paragraph, but compared to critical attention given to Annenskii’s Euripides, a paragraph is quite generous).

Famira-Kifared stands apart from the other plays stylistically, focusing more on the psychological dimension of the characters than his other tragedies. The other plays emulate Attic tragedy. Annenskii based Famira-Kifared’s plot, which recalls the Marsyas and Apollo myth, on an obscure story in which Thamyras, a musician and the son of the Thracian king, challenges the Muses to a musical contest. Thamyras loses, and to punish his arrogance, the Muses steal his musical talents. To this basic plotline, Annenskii made Thamyras’ mother sexually attracted to her son. The play is, naturally, highly musical and alliterative, adding an experimental feel to the mix of Greek theatrical traditions and modern images. Kalbouss believes “it was no doubt this blend of the old and the new that attracted the director, Tairov, to stage this drama in a cubist interpretation” (35). In some estimations, Famira-Kifared critiques the Symbolists’ aesthetic: “Thamyris is a degenerate version of the tragic hero, but he is a tragic hero nonetheless; through him, Annenskii associates his own poetry with Attic tragedy, and suggests that it is closer to the Greek tradition than the poetry of Ivanov and the other Symbolists” (Kelly, 1985, 88). Perhaps, then, to complicate his status as a pre-Acmeist even further, we can say that in Famira-Kifared Annenskii adheres more closely to the Nietzschean concept of the Hellenic spirit than Merezhkovskii’s aesthetic call in “Deti nochi” and “O prichinakh…”:
“Takovy tri glavnih elementa novogo iskusstva: misticheskoe soderzhanie, simvol i rashchirenie khudozhestvennoi vpechatlitel’nosti” (“Such are the three key elements of the new art: mystical contents, symbols, and a broadening of artistic sensitivity”) (“O prichinakh…” 47). Merezhkovskii hoped that the Greeks would lead to a palingenesis of Russian literature, and it basically did; Annenskii seems not to have heeded the call.

Annenskii’s bases his other original tragedies deliberately on the Greek theater. The subject of Tsar Iksion was taken up by all three Attic tragedians, and Euripides wrote two tragedies on the Melanippa myth; Euripides also wrote the only Greek tragedy about Laodamia. Amazingly, most scholars who have made even cursory remarks on Annenskii’s original tragedies mention only in passing that Annenskii translated Euripides. It would seem that we should draw more parallels between his translation work and the original plays he wrote, as the translations surely influenced the plays. Alas, few have studied Annenskii’s role as a translator.

Catriona Kelly gives us the most complete analysis of Annenskii’s translations of Euripides, and Wanner’s Baudelaire in Russia provides the most thorough analysis of Annenskii’s non-Classical translations, covering the Baudelaire poems Annenskii translated. Surprisingly, more work has not been done on Annenskii’s translation efforts. His is the first complete Euripides in Russian, and it was a major undertaking for the schoolmaster. He started his translations at the age of 40, and spent the following fifteen years working on them. Annenskii began his translations of Euripides in 1894 with the Bacchae (Vakk Hanki), followed by the Rhesus (Res, 1896); Heracles (Gerakl, 1897); Phoenician Women (Finikiianki) and Iphigenia at Aulis (Ifigenia zhertva, 1898); the Electra (Èlektra, 1899); Orestes (Orest, 1900); the Alcestis (Al’kesta, 1901); Hippolytus
(Ippolit, 1902); the Medea (Medeia, 1903); the 1906 edition of his Teatr Evripida included the Ion (Ion) and Cyclops (Kiklops), and posthumous editions of the Teatr Evripida (1916, 1917 and 1921) published his translations of the Andromache (Andromakha), Hecuba (Gekuba), the Helen (Elena), the Heraclidae (Geraklidy), and Iphigenia among the Taurians (Ifigeniia zhritsa). Annenskii’s Trojan Women (Troianki) and the Suppliants (Prositel’nitsy) were not published; he was not able to translate the fragments before his death. Annenskii’s intention was to include an accompanying essay for each of the translations, including for the fragments, but he died before he was able to write essays for the Hecuba, Andromache, and the Heraclidae; one of the essays discusses both the Orestes and the Electra together. While ten of Annenskii’s translations appeared in journals, the rest appeared in his collected Teatr Evripida, but only one volume of the collection appeared during Annenskii’s lifetime.

Following Annenskii’s death (1909), Fadei Zelinskii, the noted Russian Classicist, assumed the role of editor. Not only did Zelinskii tweak many of Annenskii’s translation choices (changing almost 1/3 of the total lines!), but he also used a heavy hand in editing the essays, even removing some of the essays from subsequent editions. Annenskii’s complete Euripides has never been published in a single edition. We will address more theoretically these translations in chapter 4, but Annenskii was, as befits his role as an educator, interested not only in the poetic impact of Euripides, but clearly had in mind the educational opportunity to give Russia a Euripides it could appreciate and learn from. Consider, too, the chronology of these translations: Annenskii had already translated half of Euripides before his first volume of poetry would appear—and he published that
volume under a pseudonym—begging us to give more pride of place to the translations in his larger body of work.

Annenskii’s translations received a tepid welcome, on the whole, and many of the Russian Classicists of the day, such as Varneke and Zelinskii, criticized Annenskii for allowing his sympathies for modernism to infiltrate Euripides. At the same time, Annenskii’s translations remained the standard throughout the Soviet era. Even today, his translations are commonly read: his *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, and *Bacchae* are widely available in an affordable 2006 paperback edition on Azbuka-klassika press, and the two-volume *Evripid, Tragedii* (Giperion Press, 2007) uses all but two of Annenskii’s translations (*Trojan Women* and *Suppliants* are by Shervinskii). We will return to Annenskii’s translation of Euripides at length in chapter 4. The take-away here: Annenskii was responsible for the first complete Russian Euripides. Other translators, including Merezhkovskii, had translated a play of Euripides here or there, but Annenskii took on the larger project. This is also important in view of Classical translation in late 19th century Russia. At this time, translation from Greek and Latin was typically for educational purposes only, and these translations did not concern themselves with carrying over the spirit of the ancient texts. Kelly explains that

Many translations were by classical scholars or schoolmasters. They had two main functions. There were literal versions of texts published in critical editions as supplements to the commentary, such as Latyshev’s translation of some lines from Euripides and the scholia to Euripides in the collection *Scythica et Caucasia*. Then there were the versions for schools: cribs to classical texts set for the *attestat zrelosti* examination. Their purpose was functional: they were in prose, and had no literary pretensions. (19852, 144)

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19 We cannot ignore the modernism of Euripides himself, of course, but we will attend to this in the next chapter.
Innokentii Annenskii, of course, was a classical scholar and a schoolmaster, and he wanted Euripides to sing in Russian. Annenskii looked beyond creating a crib, for he translated in the way we generally think of translation today: we should consider Annenskii’s translation as inspired by the spirit of the source text, but also as interpretive statements. For our purposes here, we focus on interpretive quality of his *Medea*, which shows how ahead of his time Annenskii was. Indeed, as we will see below, Annenskii’s translation of the *Medea* shows a feminist read *avant la lettre*. By thus blending his two worlds, academia and poetry, but also drawing on his sensitivities, Annenskii arrived at a translation that his contemporaries could not fully appreciate, not unlike his poetry.

As mentioned above, Annenskii’s first book of verse did not appear until 1903, and his creative career did not get rolling until after 1900. A late arrival into the Silver Age’s creative circles, Annenskii distanced himself from the social activities of his fellow poets, and was critical of their poetry, but many of the Symbolists respected him both for his poetry and for his professional duties. Annenskii’s professional life did not end after he became a well-known poet. We have already seen that his responsibilities changed over time as he received promotions, and less time in the classroom meant more time at his writing desk. His years in the classroom, however, are of vital importance both to Annenskii the educator and to his pupils. While teaching at Tsarskoe Selo, Annenskii taught such future literary lights as Anna Akhmatova and Nikolai Gumilev. Adding extra texture to Annenskii’s influence on the Acmeists, we see that he not only inspired them poetically, but he had a hand in some of their educations. Following his literary success (*Tikhie pesni*, his original tragedies) and the networking this afforded him, Annenskii was asked to take part in starting a new journal, *Apollon*. The original executive board of
this new Modernist journal included Ivanov, Merezhkovskii, and Gumilev. This journal would serve as the mouthpiece for Acmeism in the coming years, but Annenskii would not live to see its success.

Annenskii had a weak heart. He had suffered several health scares, largely attributed to his heart problem, and he was on medication for the condition. He had frail health beyond his weak heart, and some symptoms could indicate that he had cancer. On November 30, 1909, Annenskii was travelling from Petersburg, where he had been working, to his home in Tsarskoe Selo. Originally, he had planned to deliver a lecture in the city to the Society of Classical Philology that night on the “Taurian Princess in Euripides, Rucellai and Goethe,” but for health reasons he had canceled the appearance and head home early. In the train station, his heart gave out. Annenskii was dead, only six years after his first book of verse, before he could see Apollon in print, before he could finish his Euripides, well before his time. Innokentii Annenskii was fifty-four.
Chapter 3

We have seen that the ancient world was a central point of interest and study for many poets of the Silver Age. Certainly the educational system primed the pump that Merezhkovskii would later engage with his call to aesthetic action. And with such figures as Viacheslav Ivanov helping to lead the symbolist movement, it is no surprise that the Greeks would feature prominently in the poetic program.

For our purposes, it is Euripides whom we must examine, and in particular we need to consider his play, Medea. Once we have worked through the tragedian’s reception over time and his place in Russian Modernism, as well as his destabilizing critique of gender in ancient Athens, then we can explore fully how Innokentii Annenskii read the play and arrived at his feminist translation.

Euripides: Life and Work

Euripides’ surviving work is a great deal larger than that of Aeschylus or Sophocles, and this makes his oeuvre particularly hard to classify, to study, and to understand. Indeed, it is only in the last few years that critics have judged Euripides on par with Aeschylus and Sophocles. Is this an issue of perceived quality, relying on victory lists or Aristotelian judgment? Is this an issue of taste and mores? Euripides innovated, but so did the other extant tagedians. Euripides had a different style from those of his predecessor, Aeschylus, and his contemporary, Sophocles. As a less “traditional” poet, critics were slower to warm up to Euripides, perhaps because they have viewed him as a poet who undermines the decorum and stability of the genre. And then there is the problem of biography. As with most literary figures of ancient Greece,
the historical record is very quiet on Euripides the man. Most of what we know about him comes from twice- or three-times removed anecdotes, or (mis)interpretations in contemporary texts.

Euripides’ birth illustrates the problematic nature of ancient Athenian biography, especially as it goes with the famous. Euripides was born in Athens, either in 484 or 480 BCE: if we accept the earlier date, it would coincide with Aeschylus’ first dramatic victory; sources that cite 480 go so far as to place his birth on the very day of the Battle of Salamis, the major Athenian naval victory over Xerxes’ Persian navy. The “Marmor Parium,” a chronological tablet of dates mythical and historical, is perhaps more reliable, listing 484 as Euripides’ birth. We may argue that the “Marmor Parium” is the more accurate because it also lists 455 BCE as Euripides’ first entry into the City Dionysia, which is commonly held to be correct. Ultimately, though, the actual date of Euripides’ birth is less important than the period of Athenian history during which he came of age. Following the Greek success in the Persian Wars, Athens rose to dominance and prosperity in the Aegean, and so Euripides came up during a period of intellectual curiosity, development, and verve like Athens had never seen. Putting aside the philosophers, such as Anaxagoras and Protagoras, who were flourishing during this time, it is understood that Euripides would have associated with active poets and playwrights to get his foot into the dramatic door. His participation in the 455 BCE City Dionysia was just the first in a long career that produced at least 88 plays.

Aeschylus and Sophocles each boast seven extant tragedies. Time and Fate have left us the Persians, Seven Against Thebes, the Suppliants, The Oresteia trilogy (Agamemnon, Choephoroi, and Eumenides), and Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus; from
Sophocles’ massive output, *Ajax, Antigone, Trachinai, Oedipus the King, Electra, Philoctetes, and Oedipus at Colonus* remain. These fourteen plays are towering monuments of Western literature. Eighteen Euripidean tragedies survive, dwarfing the extant corpora of the other great tragedians. Euripides’ surviving plays cover a wide range of themes, myths, and issues:

- *Alcestis* (438)
- *Medea* (431)
- *Heracleidae* (c. 430)
- *Hippolytus* (428)
- *Andromache* (c. 425)
- *Hecuba* (c. 424)
- *Suppllices* (c. 423)
- *Electra* (c. 420)
- *Heracles* (c. 416)
- *Trojan Women* (415)
- *Iphigeneia in Tauris* (c. 414)
- *Ion* (c. 414)
- *Helen* (412)
- *Phoenissae* (c. 410)
- *Orestes* (408)
- *Cyclops* (408)
- *Iphigeneia at Aulis* and *Bacchae* (produced posthumously between 405 and 400)

Euripides won four first prizes in his career (441, 428, and two other times of unknown date), which at first glance might suggest a mediocre career. Sophocles won eighteen first prizes. Mastronarde, though, is right to remind us that despite his surprisingly few victories,

there was no question, once his career was established, that he was a tragedian of the highest rank, and clearly the archons must have welcomed his participation in the contest of the Great Dionysia. It needs to be emphasized that it was not an individual play by itself that was ranked first, second, or last in a competition, but the entire tetralogy of which it was a part. (5)
The *Medea*, for example, and its accompanying three plays, won third place. In that year, the first place tetralogy was written by Euphorion, Aeschylus’ son. While his entry might have been great, or simply timely, it is Euripides’ play that survives. Still, Euripides won few dramatic contests, and yet his reputation in the ancient world was daunting, which makes it curious that critics have been so late to sing the praises that the tragedian so deserves.

Late in his life, in 408 BCE, Euripides left the city of his birth and made for the Court of Macedon, invited by Archelaus, who was working to Hellenize his country and develop it as site of serious cultural production. At this point, Euripides had become a stock joke in comedies, and, as Dodds speculates, “in an Athens crazed by twenty years of increasingly disastrous war his outspoken criticisms of demagogy and of power-politics must have made him many enemies” (xxxix). Euripides continued to write in the north, reinvigorated, it seems: he wrote a play about Archelaus’ ancestor, which does not survive, and in Macedonia he wrote the *Bacchae* and *Iphigeneia at Aulis*. Euripides died in 406 BCE, and his last plays were produced in Athens by his son, who accepted the first prize at the City Dionysia c. 401 BCE.

**Euripides in the Silver Age**

Initially, one’s reaction to Euripides’ prevalence in Annenskii’s oeuvre might be one of surprise, but that is to sell short the Greek. Thanks in no small measure to Aristotle’s treatise on tragedy, the *Poetics*, Sophocles achieved a reasonable, but perhaps not altogether deserved prominence as *the* tragic playwright *par excellence*. Curiously, though, Euripides has enjoyed (or suffered!) a singularly mixed reputation.
In short, Euripides has gotten a bad rap over the centuries. Often considered crude, or “lower” than Aeschylus and Sophocles, many critics discount the greatness of the youngest of the three Attic tragedians. While scholars today are more and more finding excellence in Euripides, the 19th century did not like the playwright, and as a consequence the 20th century has had to move through various steps to catch him up to the other tragedians. In the introductory remarks to Gilbert Murray’s Euripides and his Age, professor Kitto observes that

during most of the nineteenth century, Euripides, on the whole, was not much in favour. It was a period which, in general, had strong and clear views about what was right and proper, in morals, religion, art, and politics. Aeschylus and Sophocles were splendid: they believed in the gods, they wrote beautiful poetry, they respected the immutable principles of dramatic art...But Euripides could not, or would not, obey the rules: he was careless, or incompetent, in making his plots; his poetry had none of Aeschylus’s splendour or of Sophocles’s dignity; and in what are after all more serious matters, namely religion and morality, he was a dangerous sceptic. (vii)

This 19th century attitude, which, as suggested, has shifted to appreciation, admiration, and even adulation of the poet, is absurd. Of course the quality of a literary work is best measured by its ability to endure and remain current, but the 19th century objection to Euripides was not based on any literary scale. The stodgy take on the Greek’s oeuvre grew out of the mores of the epoch. If Euripides is to be judged a “dangerous skeptic” by a people, one can likely learn more about the people than about Euripides.

Of the utmost importance in this debate is not what the 1800s thought of our tragedian, but rather, what did the Greeks think of him? As for whether Euripides has proven himself able to endure and remain current, the Annenskiis, the Doddses, the Buriants, and the Segals have shown, I think, that yes, Euripides is for the ages. The
Greeks thought so, too. Most famously, Euripides detractors point out that he was relatively unsuccessful at the dramatic festivals, for he took home only four victories for his more than 90 plays. This speaks in no way, though, to Euripides’ influence and power in the ancient world. The obvious proof of Euripidean importance is Seneca, so we will pass over the fact that Seneca Romanized several Euripidean tragedies (most notably the Medea, which, for all purposes the Roman turned into a closet drama). A close consideration of even a few ancient sources reveals that, despite a paucity of victories in the Theater of Dionysus, Euripides was very popular, and very important. Plutarch, for instance, reports that Alexander the Great kept his Euripides in his field library. Also according to Plutarch, the run-of-the-mill Athenian seaman could recite lines of Euripides by heart. It is said that the only dramatic festivals that Sophocles attended were ones featuring Euripides.

Perhaps a better indicator of Euripides’ stature in the ancient world comes from his most famous “critic,” Aristophanes. Few scholars are willing to see Aristophanic tom-foolery as positive, pointing to the comic’s parodies of Euripides as a clear indication of disrespect and distaste. This, however, strikes me as naive. As Mary Lefkowitz notes, “although Aristophanes and the ancient commentators did not hesitate to ascribe to Euripides himself the notions expressed by characters in his plays, we must keep in mind that in [a] passage from the Trojan Women it is, of course, Hecuba and not Euripides who is speaking” (107). More convincingly, we may consult Erich Segal, who argues, “without any doubt, the greatest contemporary admirer of Euripides was Aristophanes. His imitation was surely a form of flattery, his parody an expression of
reverence” (11). Thus, in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*, when Dicaeopolis finds out that Euripides writes his tragedies with feet on desk, he replies:

> ἀναβάδην ποεῖς
> ἐξὸν καταβάδην. οὐκ ἐτὸς χωλοὺς ποεῖς.
> ἄταρ τί τὰ ράκτ’ ἐκ τραγῳδίας ἔχεις,
> ἐσθήτ’ ἐλεχθήν; οὐκ ἐτὸς πτωχόν ποεῖς.
> ἀλλ’ ἀντιβολῶ πρὸς τῶν γονάτων σ’, Εὐριπίδη,
> δός μοι ῥακίον τι τοῦ παλαιοῦ δράματος.
> δεῖ γὰρ με λέξαι τῷ χορῷ ῥήσιν μακράν,
> αὕτη δὲ θάνατον, ἢν κακῶς λέξω, φέρει. (410-17)

You write with your feet up when you could write with them down. No wonder the heroes you create are lame. But what are you wearing, such pitiable clothing, rags from a tragedy? No wonder the heroes you create are beggars. But I beg you by your knees, Euripides, give me a rag from that old play of yours. For I must make a long speech to the Chorus, and the result of it will be death for me if I fail to be eloquent.20

Aristophanes may be poking some fun at Euripides’ characters, but Dicaeopolis explains that only Euripides’ eloquence can save him from death. Further, can we really claim that Aristophanes is criticizing Euripides’ characters? Aristophanes is more likely using Dicaeopolis to represent vulgar opinion, rather than the position of fellow poets. Aristophanes, then, while often cited as a detractor, is better characterized as a fan.

We cannot consider Aristophanic literary criticism of Euripides without looking at the *Frogs*. In this comedy, Aristophanes presents us with a contest to decide whether Aeschylus or Euripides will take the throne as Chair of Tragedy in the underworld. Dionysus, fittingly, serves as the judge. Literary scholars often cite the *Frogs* as among the earliest works of literary criticism. Additionally, the play functions as a critique of Athens’ decline as the preeminent polis in Greece, wherein Aeschylus and Euripides represent more than just their plays and styles, but also they represent their eras. Thus,

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Aeschylus wins the contest as the poet best suited to the “salvation of Athens and the continuation of her choral festivals” (Aristophanes 1418-19).

The action of the comedy includes much ridiculousness, but the kernel of the play remains a serious consideration of taste, poetic quality, the service poetry renders to society, and the duty of the poet. Notably, Dionysus cannot make up his mind until the end of the play, and while he sides with Aeschylus, Euripides (whom we must understand to be Aristophanes the critic) makes several insightful points about his work, suggesting ultimately that while Aeschylus writes beautifully, there is a realism in the Euripidean theater that deserves a close look. Mark Griffith makes the point more emphatically, arguing:

Euripides is insisting here that his plays actually tell the truth in exposing the nasty but inescapable realities of human (especially female) behavior, while Aeschylus argues that playwrights should select carefully—even edit and self-censor—their traditional material so as to provide only good and enlightening examples to their audiences. (106)

The responsibility of artists and the didactic roles that they can play is a serious issue that has resonated, clearly, for millennia. And so, taken with the ideas proposed in Plato’s Republic, it becomes clear that even in his own time, Euripides’ plays were under some scrutiny for what they might teach the citizens of Athens. The citizens, further, are a shrewd bunch according to Aristophanes. In the play, the Chorus sings:

And if you’re afraid of any ignorance among the spectators, that they won’t appreciate your subtleties of argument, don’t worry about that, because things are no longer that way. For they are veterans, and each one has a book and knows the fine points; (1109-17).
We would be wise to read a certain irony in the Chorus’ claim that the Athenian audience in a play that is so critical of Athens and the state of its musical culture, but what emerges in this passage is the suggestion that the people were familiar with tragedy, with the City Dionysia, and they were wont to judge what they saw. Therefore, when Dionysus makes his final judgement and Aeschylus is declared the winner, it certainly appears that Aeschylus is the preferred poet.

Although Aeschylus wins the contest, the final judgement of poetic quality is vague. Dionysus cuts the contest short. He will ultimately choose Aeschylus so that “our city, rescued, could continue her choral festival” (1420). While Dionysus’ concern is for the salvation of the city, his poetic preference is not so clear. Several lines earlier, the god declares, “These men are my friends, and I’l not judge between them;/I don’t want to get on the bad side of either of them./For one I consider a master, the other I enjoy” (1411-13). The Greek text does not have Dionysus claim that one is a “master,” but rather than one is sophos [wise] (1413). Dionysus never reveals which playwright is wise, and which pleases him. Ultimately, perhaps, it makes no difference. Griffith suggests that Aeschylus clearly wins, but we should question whether Aristophanes himself sees Aeschylus as the superior poet, or whether he concludes his play with this for other ends, such as audience satisfaction (or critique). Regardless, the treatment of Euripides in Aristophanic literary criticism demonstrates that Euripides reputation in the ancient world reflects his reception over the centuries. As regards Annenskii, it seems that he would have been disappointed with Dionysus’ decision. Indeed,

Athenian society was (as most societies in the world today continue to be) pervasively androcentric and sexist. The most ‘potent’ poet, the one who has not ‘lost his little bottle of oil,’ is likely to prevail in public debate over one who
claims to speak for women and the poor, for intellectuals, for musical and theological innovation—and in such respects to be representing social realities truthfully (democratically?), rather than merely nostalgically. (Griffith 218)

It is the giving of this voice to the voiceless that attracted Annenskii to Euripides.

Because Greek tragedy cannot responsibly be removed from its proper context, to wit, the religious festivals to Dionysus, we ought to consider this context always when examining the role of tragedy, and by extension, Euripides, in Russian Silver Age poetry. Keeping this context in mind helps one understand the Symbolists’ motivations and investment in tragedy, Dionysus, Euripides, and all that they represent. The Symbolist connections to the god are nowhere better articulated than in Ivanov. In addition to having written a lengthy cycle of poems to Dionysus in his first collection of poetry, _Kormchie zvezdy_ [Lode Stars], Ivanov often invokes the Bacchic essence in his theoretical treatises and, as a scholar, Ivanov wrote an engaging article on Nietzsche and Dionysus, as well as a dissertation on the god and pre-Dionysianism. As if this were not enough, one reads reports of Ivanov and his wife donning ancient garb at the salon-like gatherings in their Petersburg apartment (mentioned in the previous chapter). This is a particularly interesting aspect to note, for the weekly meetings at the Ivanovs’ apartment, known as The Tower, became the center of intellectual activity in St. Petersburg. These gatherings would often go late into the night. The influence and range of participants that came to the Ivanovs’ for “Wednesdays,” were great. Bernice Rosenthal explains that “their St. Petersburg apartment, ‘The Tower,’...was a seedbed for ideas between 1904 and 1912. Idealists and realists, Symbolists and Marxists, Socialist Revolutionaries and Constitutional Democrats were frequent visitors” (20). These philosophy parties would
include discussions about their literary movement’s tenets, philosophy, art, and they were unlike anything most had ever seen: “As portrayed by the contemporaries, the atmosphere of these [gatherings] was congenial, even if outwardly somewhat bizarre” (Rudich 1998, 57). This is not to make light of the Ivanovs’ project. On the contrary; if, as Rudich described him, Ivanov was the “Hellenic spirit incarnate,” one finds no better support for this than the fact that the man was at turns a first rate scholar of unparalleled learning, then a bacchant, reveling high above Petersburg—a city that represents one of the ultimate expressions of man’s power over nature. For, because Petersburg was built out of one man’s arrogance on a swamp, there is something delightfully Dionysiac and contradictory about Russia’s leading poets and philosophers having orgiastic rituals within its baroque architecture.

A decade before Ivanov’s Tower meetings, though, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii wrote his poem, “Pesnia Vakkhanok” (“Song of the Bacchae,” 1894). Merezhkovskii is already singing of the power and attraction in the Dionysiac, and the inspirational power of the god is a central feature of the poem and the Symbolist movement. Indeed, one may read “Pesnia Vakkhanok” as a sequel, or remix of his “Deti nochi” (on which, see above). “Pesnia Vakkhanok” celebrates the power of the smile Dionysus brings, and victory over the arrogant and self-righteous. The poem concludes with invocations and prayers to Dionysus, to bliss, and to inspiration:

Эван-Эвээз! к нам, о Младость!
Унынье—величайший грех.
Один есть подвиг в жизни—радость,
Одна есть правда в жизни—смех!
Подобны смеху наши стоны...
Гряди, всесильный Вакх, дерзай,
И все преграды, все законы
С невинным смехом нарушай!
Мы нектар жизни выпиваем
До дна, как боги в небесах,
И смехом смерть мы побеждаем,
С безумьем Вакхом в сердцах!

_Evan-Evoe!_ Come to us, o Youth!
Despondency is the greatest of sins.
There is one feat in life: gladness,
There is one truth in life: the laughter!
Our groans are the same as our laughter...
Venture, all-powerful Bacchus,
Against the ridges and all obstacles,
Transgress all laws with an innocent smile!
We guzzle down the nectar of life,
Like gods in the clouds,
And we overcome death with laughter,
With the a Bacchic madness in our hearts!...

What all of this ultimately points to is that Dionysus, and the Dionysiac spirit, had taken hold of the Silver Age. It is undeniable that the education, as outlined above, had something to do with this interest in the power of the _evoe_. To whatever extent their study of the Greeks influenced the Symbolists, however, education alone does not account for the powerful presence of the ancient world in their Silver Age lives. The title “Silver Age,” as discussed above, is perhaps an unfair modifier for the poetic thrust at this time, as it so dramatically calls attention to the fact that it is not “golden.” “Silver” is, perhaps, a useful adjective for the time period during which these poets were working. There is a strong strain of decadence running through a great deal of their corpora, and it is not difficult to identify a _fin de siècle_ poetics at play in their poetry. The _fin de siècle_ moment and outlook may account, in part, for the Symbolist turn to Dionysus specifically. Tolstoi’s Classical System gave them the tools, but their environment goaded them to Dionysus. Much of the philosophical positions taken by the Symbolist theoreticians reflect various aspects of Dionysianism, but perhaps none so much as the
concept of sobornost’ [“collectivism”]. This is not a collectivism in a Marxist sense, but rather a mystical, religious collectivity as seen in Bacchic worship, and perhaps expressed in the Slavophile notion of orthodoxy.

If, then, we can connect classical motifs and Dionysus to the Silver Age poets via Tolstoi’s classical pedagogy and the end-of-the-century anxiety that the poets felt, wherefore tragedy and, more importantly, wherefore Euripides? The tragedy, or theater side, is more obvious from the programmatic writings. For the Symbolists, tragedy and Dionysus were virtually inseparable, which is why, as mentioned above, the context of a tragedy is so key. It has also been mentioned that several Silver Age poets wrote their own tragedies. In his informative article, “On Russian Mythological Tragedy,” Tomas Venclova compares the original plays of Viacheslav Ivanov with those of Marina Tsvetaeva, active years after Ivanov. Venclova identifies a specific motivation in Ivanov’s tragic efforts: he wanted to bring the ancient art to a modern time. Ivanov wrote two Greek tragedies (in Russian), Tantalus and Prometheus, both of which are complex, written in an elaborate language, and filled with esoteric allusions which are difficult for the unprepared reader. These are works of a philologist and erudite scholar. At times their complexity develops into a certain pretentiousness. Tantalus is an attempt at a strict reproduction of the Greek tragedy not only on a semantic level, but also on a compositional and rhythmic level. One may state that its syntax and even phonetics are hellenized to a considerable degree: proper names are always cited with Greek accentuation, Greek words are often encountered, diphthongs of the Greek type are accumulated in abundance, and the word order deviates a great deal from Russian standards. (90).

Ivanov clearly took tragedy very seriously and saw in it an artistic door to sobornost’, to Truth. For him, and he was not alone, tragedy and the “free Hellenic spirit” that
Merezhkovskii identifies in “O prichinakh…”, are inseparable. They are inseparable from each other and they are inseparable from Dionysus. They are inseparable from Symbolism, and so it is no surprise that the Silver Age’s most enigmatic poet, Annenskii, devoted more to the most enigmatic tragedian than to any other aspect of his poetic or academic output.

Much has been made of Euripides’ modernity; it has been exhaustively documented and discussed in the scholarship. The tragedian’s modernity comes out in every aspect of his craft. Hegel says of Euripides’ characters that they represent more complex personae than those Sophocles or Aeschylus. In his, The Philosophy of Fine Art, Hegel argues that modern characters also differ in the nature of their constancy or their spiritual vacillation and distraction. We find, no doubt, the weakness of indecision, the fluctuations of reflection, the weighing of reasons, conformably to which a resolve should be directed, here and there in classical drama, and more particularly in the tragedies of Euripides. But Euripides is a writer whose tendency is already to forsake the wholly plastic completeness of characterization and action and to develop exceptional aspects of personal sensibility. (86)

We remember Dicaeopolis’ criticisms of Euripides’ characters. Are the heroes lame beggars, or are they real? Are they pathetic excuses for tragic figures or are they simply pathetic? Indeed, Karl Reinhardt, in discussing the Hippolytus and Artemis’ desertion of the hero at his moment of dying, illustrates that Euripidean characters, be they gods or mortals, are alone. He vents:

And how perfidious that the goddess herself morally justifies her desertion! She would gladly have it otherwise!...She excuses her self with Aphrodite and Zeus. In the Euripidean gods—so incarnate do they appear—there is a subjective human streak: they deceive, are vengeful
towards, betray and desert mortals—in the poor mortals’ belief in the gods. Or, in so far as they embody powers, like Aphrodite, the mortals fall victim to their own impotence. (24)

Such is the modern crisis. The age of industrialization, automation, and its fin de siècle aesthetics produced a similar isolation, moral ambiguity, and lack of confidence.

For example, Avril Pyman explores at length the isolation and loneliness of Dmitrii Merezhkovskii. After explaining the solitude felt by Merezhkovskii, Pyman explains that he “sought faith, religious experience, but felt that he lacked ‘power’—in prayer as in poetry” (31). Hippolytus’ loneliness at the end of the play, while tragically and mythically out of human proportion, surely struck a chord in the doleful Merezhkovskii.

We mortals are not all-powerful. This loneliness and spleen are not reserved for Merezhkovskii but actually define much of the Silver Age’s aesthetics. We see, for example, a certain melancholy even in the solipsistic poetry of Fedor Sologub. He finds a duty and freedom in his solitary position:

Моей божественной природы  
Я не открою никому.  
Тружусь, как раб, а для свободы  
Зову я ночь, покой и тьму.

I do not open to anyone  
My divine nature.  
I toil, like a slave, but for the sake of freedom,  
I invite night, peace, and darkness.

Consider, too, the epigraph from Annenskii’s first book of verse:

Из заветного фиала  
В эти песни пролита,  
Но увы! не красота...  
Только мука идеала.

From the cherished phial  
Into these songs has been spilled,
Alas! not beauty…
Only the torment of the ideal.

An ominous start to Tikhie pesni (Quiet Songs). The reader will also remember that Annenskii’s nom de plume for this collection of poetry was Nik T-O, or No One.

Nancy Pollack (1999) notes that “anguish” (toska) is the recurring theme in Annenskii’s poetry (148), and this comes as no surprise from a man who not only wanted to remain anonymous but also claimed to be a non-person. To be sure, Annenskii’s lyric poetry is marked by an anxiety for aesthetic truth, and all of his output (his poetry, his original tragedies, his translations) is preoccupied with the loneliness of man.

In part, the loneliness that Annenskii saw in the human condition attracted him to Euripides over the other tragedians. Aristotle denigrates Euripides for representing men not as they should be (like Sophocles), but rather as they are. The psychological complexities that come through Euripidean characters piqued Annenskii’s interest and, as Zara Martirosova Torlone explains, vis à vis Annenskii’s concern for our being alone, “there are two pivotal points of reference for Annenskii’s poetics: one is Euripides, but the other is Fedor Dostoevskii, the suffering of whose heroes becomes a form of rebellion, of doubt about the righteousness of the existing world order” (83). For Annenskii, as for Dostoevskii, the world was a metaphysically challenging place; representing the difficulty of a life where the divine was distant, cold, and a reality in which human existence required explanation, produced much anxiety in the poet. Indeed, as Torlone observes, in Annenskii was “an awareness of the constant threat that the ideal Beauty faces from ‘real’ life” (60).

Euripides, too, used poetry to explore reality, not just mythically outsized heroes. Mary Lefkowitz argues that “as a dramatist, Euripides’ purpose is to describe ancient
myth in realistic and vivid terms; and his lesson, if anything, as in other Greek religious ritual, is to do honour to the gods and, in the process, to remind men of their mortal limitations” (110). These limitations are the thing that weighs so heavily on us. In their original tragedies, “[Viacheslav] Ivanov’s characters were dominated by divine necessity, but Annenskii emphasized the remoteness of the gods and the centrality of human presence” (Torlone 82-3). Ivanov and Aeschylus have certain similarities, which is no shock to those familiar with Ivanov and his intellectual program. But Euripides and Annenskii were kinsmen of a sort: two poets who desired peace in an ontological situation that will not cooperate with our psychological and spiritual needs. Bernard Knox, who highlights in Euripides the same isolation we observe in Russian Modernism, helps us connect Annenskii to Euripides. Casting us back to Aristophanes’ use of public opinion in the mouth of his thick Dicaeopolis, Knox observes, “like the incomprehension of his audiences, this apparent withdrawal hints at a modern situation: the alienation of the intellectual writer. And many passages in his plays suggest that he was familiar with that situation” (6). Annenskii, it should be noted, was just as sympathetic to Euripides’ modernity as anyone. In his biography of Annenskii, Vsevelod Setchkarev comments,

on the whole, neither Zelinski nor Varneke—the two closest colleagues of Annenskii—can forgive him his tendency toward ‘modernism’. Varneke, decisively, and Zelinski, in a more cautious way, deplore the aberration of the scholar into a field which, to them, had a touch of Bohemianism and decadence. (34)

But is Annenskii’s modernism of the Greek so decadent an act as Zelinski and Varneke felt? Or is Annenskii looking to represent something more than just an equivalence between the source and target? Such concerns and a further elucidation of Euripides’ modernism will appear below as we analyze the Medea and Annenskii’s translation.
We must now consider, beyond his modern aesthetics, what else about Euripides so grabbed our Russian poet-translator. Again, to quote Knox, “the trouble with being absolutely modern is that you are ahead of all of your contemporaries. You are, in fact, like all prophets, rejected and scorned by the present, to be acclaimed and understood by the future” (4).

Focusing beyond the cosmic/divine concerns of Euripidean tragedies we come to the mortal characters. Among the most salient of Euripidean subjects is women. It is Euripides’ attention to and compassion for the position of women, I argue, that Annenskii found as most inspirational and most meaningful to his own translation program. We must, therefore, address the issue that Euripides has often been judged a misogynist. I maintain that he is not. Euripides is full of brilliant, powerful, ambitious women who find themselves needing to make decisions that no man anywhere in Greek tragedy must make.

It is a scholarly irresponsible move to tag Euripides misogynistic. There is no question that the man is of an era that did not treat women equally, and of a culture with a deep-rooted patriarchal ethos; we shall go further and state with no equivocation that ancient Greece was a clearly misogynistic place (on which more below). But, does Euripides set out to slam women in his plays? Does he deliberately portray women as any less noble or less dignified than men? Jason does not kill his children, but Medea is not an opportunistic adulterer. Alcestis, as Merezhkovskii himself points out, is a model, a symbol of spousal love and fidelity. It is Admetus whom we despise.21 In the words of F. L. Lucas,

21 Merezhkovskii, goading his reader to see the symbolic quality of Greek art in “O Prichinakh...”, to see its utility, its power, and its universality, points to Euripides. He asks: “Razve Al'kestis Evripida,
of his misogyny sufficient nonsense has already been written. That such a charge could be seriously brought against the creator of Alcestis, and Phaedra, Macaria and Polyxena, Andromache and Creussa and Iphigenia, is merely ludicrous...He made them subtle and gave them brains and therewith the knowledge of evil as well as good; and if this seems to resemble the Serpent’s dealings with Eve,—well, there is a great deal to be said for the Serpent.

(36)

Euripides’ reputation as a misogynist usually takes its cue from Aristophanes’ Thesmophoriazousai. The following lines have plagued, quite wrongly in fact, our Euripides for more than two millennia:

EU: ...The women have formed a conspiracy against me, and at the Thesmophoria they mean to hold an assembly about me today, to destroy me.
KIN.: But why is that?
EU: Because I write tragedies and speak ill of them.
KIN.: Yes, by Poseidon, and serves you right... (80-86)

What proponents of the “Euripides is a misogynist” camp tend to ignore is that in the Thesmophoriazousai Aristophanes treats Euripides with a great deal of sympathy and admiration. The women of the Thesmophoria feel that Euripides puts bad women on the stage, but he really does no such thing. He puts on the stage scorned women, women in love, and women with the ability to “act like a man.” Complex women. Medea is the perfect example of this, for while Medea is no ordinary woman, she is nuanced, challenging, controversial and sympathetic. More to the point, Medea is extra-ordinary due to her lineage (Helios is her grandfather), and she is skilled in witchcraft. Further, when she speaks with Jason, her language is cool, collected, and ruthlessly logical. Any audience desire that she show compassion and pain, as she does when she screams from

umirauiushchaia, shtoby spasti muzha,—ne simvol materinskoi zhalosti, kotoraiia odukhotvoriaet liubov' muzhchiny i zhenshchiny” (46)? [Is Euripides’ Alcestis, dying in order to save her husband, not a symbol of maternal compassion, that inspires the love of a man and a woman?”].
inside the palace, is dashed when she is in the orchestra; there she is unbroken. As Jennifer March notes, “here Euripides draws with intense compassion the agonized conflict within this human being who, faced with this tragic choice, suffers such tormented self-division, such mortal tearing-apart” (41). As Medea exists in both worlds, that of men and that of women, and moves fluidly between them so Annenskii straddled and moved fluidly in his two worlds, poetry and academia.

Reconfiguring Medea: Space, Dialogue, Gender on the Euripidean Stage

Euripides’ Medea (431 BCE) has justly received much critical attention, and the range of studies of the text testify to its fecund and polysemic qualities. Scholars have examined the tragedy as an extension of the archetypal Greek revenge-story (see, e.g., Burnett, 1973; and Kerrigan, 1996); others have read Medea as a complexly gendered psychological expression (Foley, 1989); others still have linked her to Homeric and Sophoclean heroes (see esp. Bongie, 1977; and Flory, 1978). These are seminal studies in Euripides criticism, which continue to inform and shape subsequent research, and while much has been made of the Medea and gender, past studies have been locked in the polarizing binary of masculine/feminine. If we insist on understanding her in such a rigid dichotomy, we cannot fully understand her or the play. Innokentii Annenskii saw, years ahead of his time, the problem with a simplified reading of the play and the foreign witch; while his translation does not attempt anything as current as what follows, working through a contemporary reading of the play (mine) helps show just how radical Annenskii was.

Critics have yet to examine Medea’s negotiation of that space between the masculine and the feminine—the androgynous. This masculine/feminine dichotomy that so strongly defines the literature on Euripides’ play needs to be reconfigured in order to more fully understand the character of Medea and Euripides’ manipulation of both the source-myth and his genre.

I contend that Medea is a social androgyne, whose social modalities destabilize traditional readings of her gender. Medea is “androgy nous” because of her ability to move in and out of socially gendered roles. We thus now identify Euripides’ characterization of Medea qua androgyne and examine her negotiation of the space-between as indicative of a gender other than masculine or feminine. Establishing Euripides’ androgynization of the foreign witch opens new readings of the Medea, and it challenges the text’s conventional receptions. 23 I organize my argument around Froma Zeitlin’s four principal elements of the theatrical experience in ancient Greece (the body, theatrical space, plot, and mimesis). In what follows, we will examine Medea’s body and how Euripides undermines this overdetermined symbol to show that Medea is free from the bonds of her sex. The body on the stage must move in and through theatrical space. In this way, I analyze Medea’s ability to manipulate the gendered spaces of the polis, as well as the stage, as a function of her androgyny. We then explore Zeitlin’s concept of plot as it relates to Medea’s gender, and the play-text, for not only does the narrative structure of the tragedy factor into our reconfiguring of Medea’s gender, but the heroine’s

23 C.A.E. Lusching, in her “Interiors: Imaginary Spaces in ‘Alcestis’ and ‘Medea,’” Mnemosyne, 45:1 (1992), 19-44, touches on some of the issues we will discuss here; similarly, Helene Foley’s “Medea’s Divided Self,” Classical Antiquity, 8:1 (April, 1989), 61-85, explores the “two Medeas,” (one masculine and heroic, one feminine and emotional). Neither of these valuable and important studies, however, push their interpretations to Medea as androgyne. My analysis does exactly this. Foley’s study also does not recognize Medea’s inversed spatiality (on which, more below), which I identify and which informs much of my position on redefining her gender.
own “plotting” (scheming) further reveals her social adaptability. Finally, we consider Zeitlin’s fourth element, mimesis, which we find to function alongside Medea’s androgyny both textually (Medea’s playacting and dissimulation) and metatextually (the role of the actor portraying the androgynous Medea). This discussion thus reevaluates Euripides’ representation of Medea’s gender as a complex of spatial, linguistic, and representational code breaking. These violations reveal Medea’s mixed gender to be modally and textually significant for a fuller understanding of the play, the afterlife of the myth itself, and the way Innokentii Annenskii translated the play into Russian already in 1903. After establishing Euripides’ creation of an androgyne heroine, we will briefly consider the implication of Medea’s androgyny vis à vis the text’s reception.

We observe Medea’s complicated gender representation in various ways throughout the play-text. The best method to explore this gender play is to break the tragedy and its socio-cultural milieu into quadrants of meaning. In her insightful article, “Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Tragedy,” Froma Zeitlin establishes four principal elements of the theatrical experience in ancient Greece, and she effectively shows how “the feminine” is a dominant force in tragedy. The four principal elements, which we will consider in more depth below, are the ‘body,’ ‘theatrical space,’ the ‘plot,’ and ‘mimesis.’ Zeitlin acknowledges a masculine quality in Medea, but she does not spend much time on her. It is precisely through Zeitlin’s filters for the feminine, though, that we may most effectively read Medea’s androgynous nature.

In ancient Greece, gender was a pretty cut-and-dry issue. Those cultural norms that made up the masculine read like the Homeric epics, where men fight and die, hunt, and lord over slaves and women. As the Greek social system became more democratic
and more complex, the role of men became not more ossified, because their roles were never up for debate, but more easily defined along lines of citizenship, political participation, and lineage. Citizenship would have been a non-issue for Medea and Jason in mythic time, but it was a serious issue for Euripides and his audience. Citizenship and the polis are thus part of the semantic field of the Medea. Courage, honor, and “manliness,” that potent mix of strength, fatherly pride and duty, were no less integral to man in classical Athens than in the Bronze Age, but the polis introduced a more complicated relationship with justice, paternity, and society.

The role of women remained essentially unchanged. Even with the honor of citizenship, women still lived in what would have resembled a perpetual adolescence. They were not to leave the house unaccompanied, they were not allowed to participate in politics, and they could not represent themselves in court: they were forced into social dependence in nearly every way. Women had a guardian throughout their lives, whether it was their father, a brother, an uncle, or their husband. The cultural expectation of womanly behavior included physical and emotional weakness, and a temperament given to scheming, lying, and a general lack of virtue. One can find exceptional female characters in many ancient texts—of which Medea is certainly one—but Homer, in general, provides a typical portrayal of these different gender roles: we see men getting their hands dirty, fighting for honor and glory, spreading their virility; we also see women, weaving and crying. Naturally there are Homeric exceptions to this—Andromache, Helen, and Penelope come immediately to mind—but when Homer paints women with broad strokes (such as the women in the Greek camp on the Trojan plain, or the women wooed by the suitors), they are stereotypical. Euripides, perhaps as a function
of his time, perhaps as a function of his genre, perhaps as a function of his genius, gives
us many female characters who defy certain expectations of their gender, but it is
uniquely Medea whose actions, language, and power blur the line between male and
female to resist both genders, effectively forging a new one. It is uniquely Euripides’
Medea whose androgyny defies the sexual politics of her time (both mythic and
performative). And it is Medea’s challenging of stereotypes that evokes such sympathy in
Annenskii.

Zeitlin’s first principal element is the body. She proposes that, “the emphasis in
theater must inevitably fall upon the body—the performing body of the actor as it
embodies its role, figures its actions, and is shown to us in stylized poses, gestures, and
attitudes” (71-2). Concerning the feminine, Zeitlin goes on to explain that woman and
body are impossible to separate in the ancient Greek context:

Bodiliness is what most defines her in the cultural system
that associates her with the physical processes of birth and
death and stresses the material dimensions of her existence,
as exemplified, above all, in Hesiod’s canonical myth of
how the first woman, Pandora, was created. Men have
bodies, to be sure, but in the gender system the role of
representing the corporeal side of life in its helplessness
and submission to constraints is primarily assigned to
women. (74)

Medea is a woman, but in Euripides’ play, she negotiates both the feminine and
masculine worlds, in spite of her body; Medea may be a victim in some ways, but she
does not allow her body to victimize her further. In essence, Medea erases the
determinacy of her body to assert a power and control that transcends gender. We
observe Medea’s effacing move both in her language and in her actions, particularly in
the spatialization of her deeds and words. A major part of Medea’s speech-acts is related
to theatrical space (Zeitlin’s second element), and so we will address some of her language below, as well, but Medea’s rhetoric cannot be separated from her body. The way the other characters speak to her, too, highlights her androgynous nature in the tragedy.

The prologue-monologue, delivered by the Nurse, does much to set the tone for the gender play in the text. The Nurse introduces her mistress with many verbs and modifiers that are typical of Greek women. In these opening lines, “poor” (ἡ δύστηνος, 20) Medea “resigns her body to grief” (σῶµ’ ψφείσ’ ἄλγηδόσιν, 24) and refuses to eat in her emotional state (κεῖται δ’ ἀσίτος, 24). She wails for her father (αὐτὴ πρὸς αὐτὴν πατέρ’ ἀποιώξηι φίλον, 31). While such behavior does not befit a Greek man, and such gestures of grief resemble a woman in mourning (we should not forget that her grief here stems from her husband’s infidelity, not his death), the Nurse’s words nonetheless anticipate Euripides’ depiction of Medea as neither fully feminine, nor fully masculine, but something in between. This line is littered with feminine sound symbolism:

Μὴδέα δ’ ἡ δύστηνος ἠτιμασμένη

A shift in language in the Nurse’s description, however, will drag Medea out of the feminine and into the androgynous. Later in her monologue, the Nurse characterizes Medea as “dangerous” (δεινὴ γαρ, 44). The adjective δεινός, ~ή, ~όν, is often used of Homeric heroes, their weapons, or, in the context of a horrible sight, in the expression δεινὸς ἱδέσθαι (“frightening to witness”). Characterizing Medea thus begins to link her to the long line of Homeric men, whose valiant depictions only reinforced Greek attitudes
of manliness and masculinity. The Nurse pushes this view of Medea further. Once the tutor brings the children home, she sends the boys indoors, but wants them kept from their mother:

"\[\text{ἡδὴ γὰρ εἶδον ὃµµα νῦν ταυροµένην τοῖσδ}, \text{ ὡς τι δρασείουσαι...} (92-93)\]

For already I see that she is making her gaze bull-fierce at them, as if there is something she plans to do...

Heroes in ancient texts are frequently described as or compared to wild animals. Having already been termed δεινή, now being likened to a wild bull, and given the violent context of the Jason and Medea myth, Euripides, already in the first one hundred lines of the play, is rewriting Medea as something more (or less) than a woman.

As mentioned, Medea’s own rhetoric also androgynizes her. During her encounter with Creon, Medea has much to say concerning parenthood. Medea, addressing the Chorus just before Creon’s entrance, has already asserted her bodiliness regarding her children, claiming more honor for childbirth, the ultimate expression of the feminine body, than for standing thrice in the van of war:

"\[\text{λέγουσι δ’ ἡµὰς ὡς ἀκίνδυνον βίον ἄρνανται δορί, κακῶς φρονοῦντες· ὡς τρὶς ἂν παρ’ ἀσπίδα στήναι θέλουµ’ ἂν µᾶλλον ἢ τεκεῖν ἄπαξ.} (248-51)\]

They say that we live a life free from danger, within the home, as opposed to those who do battle with the spear, but they think imprudently; you see, I would prefer to stand in the line of battle three times rather than give birth once.

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24 Bongie’s and later Foley’s analyses link Medea to Sophocles’ Ajax (passim), which, for us, is an interesting comparison given Ajax’ death. Not only does Ajax suicide, but he falls on his own sword, which penetrative act also carries a playful semiotic as regards Ajax’ body.

25 All translations of Euripides are mine.
Her famous words here challenge conventional sexual politics. Mastronarde notes that Medea’s language subverts traditional, misogynistic views of gender roles, which find women safe in the home having babies, while men take risks in war and toil for the family: “Medea cleverly focuses the contrast on a parallelism promoted by public ideology: serving as a soldier is the fulfillment of a man’s life in the polis, and bearing a child is the fulfillment of a woman’s, and death in childbirth was creditable just as death in battle was” (in Euripides, 213, n. 248-51). The implication, then, that motherhood and childbirth deserve the same honor as a man going to war, is that a woman’s body is as valuable to the polis as a man’s body. Valorizing her womanliness, though, is not enough for Medea. She goes further in her conversation with Creon, actually assuming the role of father. Part of her argument to postpone her exile for one day is to appeal to Creon the father, not just Creon the ruler. Medea supplicates:

Allow me to stay just this one day, and to bring to full completion my plans by which we might go through with this exile, and a strategy for my boys, since their father does not care to contrive any aid at all for his children. Pity them! You, too, are a father (of children). It is only reasonable that you should wish them well. As for my own situation, I have concern there, if I am to go into exile, but I weep for them made needy by this misfortune.

The hidden message here is that Jason is a poor father, a failure in the duty of his gender.

Because Medea must now provide for the children, Medea herself becomes, rhetorically
at least, the father. Her body suffered to birth her sons, and she now is taking Jason’s body from him in his inability to be a provider. What is more, Medea forensically changes her body by equating her duties to her children with Creon’s duties to his own offspring. When Medea says “καὶ σύ τοι παὶδῶν πατήρ/πέφυκας” (“you, too, are a father…” 344-5), she connects herself to Creon in an unexpected and subversive way: she takes on a paternal role. Medea is no longer the feminine “mother;” of course, she is not a father, either: in this passage, Medea becomes the androgynous “parent,” who must care and provide in all respects, a fact that undermines Jason’s masculinity and underlines Medea’s complexly performed gender.

The importance of this encounter with Creon is vital to Medea’s androgynization. The thrust of her argument is that she is scared and helpless, but, as in the case of the parenthood issue, her androgynous nature comes out, which her language in the subsequent scene buttresses. Creon’s exit marks a powerful shift in Medea’s language and action, which will last through the remainder of the tragedy. Euripides uses the Chorus of Corinthian women to highlight the change, but also to cement the effect of Medea’s gender shift.

When Creon exits, the women of the Chorus shriek:

Φεῦ, φεῦ, μελέα τῶν σῶν ἄχεων,
δύστηνε γόναι,
ποῖ ποτὲ τρέψη; τίνα πρὸς ξενίαν
ἡ δόμον ἡ χόνα σωτῆρα θεόν
ὦς εἰς ἄπορον σε κλύδωνα θεός,
Μῆδεια, κακῶν ἑπόρευσεν. (358-63)

Oh, alas! Poor woman, miserable in your grieving, where in the world can you turn to? To what guest-friend, or house, or land providing rescue from your troubles? How so a god has launched you, Medea, into an unmanageable sea of troubles!
This shouting and fear fits the mold of an ancient Greek woman. Consider, however, Medea’s response:

κακῶς πέπρακται πανταχῇ· τὶς ἀντερεῖ;
ἀλλ’ οὔτι ταὐτὴ ταῦτα, μὴ δοκεῖτέ πω. (363-4)

The situation is bad in every way. Who would deny it? But by no means will these things happen like this, do not assume it.

This reply is a far cry from the standard representation of the Greek γυνῆ. It is even a far cry from the depiction of Medea just three hundred lines earlier, during the Nurse’s speech. When Medea contemplates in this same scene how she ought to exact her revenge, then, it is no surprise that she elects poison:

ἀλλ’ ἕν τί μοι πρόσαντες· εἰ ληφθῆσομαι
dόμους ὑπερβαίνουσα καὶ τεχνωμένη,
θανοῦσα θήσω τοῖς ἑμοῖς ἐχθροῖς γέλων.
κράτιστα τὴν εὐθεῖαν, ἢ περφύκμεν
σοφοὶ μάλιστα, φαρμάκοις αὐτοὺς ἐλεῖν. (381-5)

But just one thing hinders me. If I were to get caught entering the house and scheming, in my death I would provide my enemies an opportunity for mocking me. Proceeding along the straight path, by which I am naturally exceedingly skilled/wise, it is best to destroy them with poison drugs.

Medea, in this speech, “sees herself not just as a woman wronged, but as a great personage in the heroic mould of an Ajax or an Achilles: she owes it to herself and to her high pedigree to allow no enemy to triumph over her” (Easterling, 192). Breaking slightly from such heroic models as Achilles, however, Medea decides against striking down her enemies with a sword, Clytemnestra-style, which would be the most masculinely coded act; she decides against arson, which she characterizes as too feminine, locating the crime specifically inside the “bridal home” (δῶμα νυμφικόν, 378).
Poisoning her enemies provides maximum pain with minimal personal risk on her part. Poison carries a clearly feminine connotation, both because in Greek literature women frequently yield poisons, and Medea is a witch, skilled in such black arts. We may, however, compare Medea’s poison to the cowardly arrows of the effeminate playboy, Paris. Medea, as we have seen, has already been likened to Homeric heroes. She is related to Circe (though there is no mention of this in the play), which genealogically connects Medea to the Homeric tradition and a family history of witchcraft. Her choice of poison, like Paris’ arrows, seems to win her no respect, though they certainly get the job done. Moreover, Medea’s choice of poison reflects her concern for her own body and her unwillingness to personally engage the bodies of Creon and his daughter—this smacks of the Homeric shift in the heroic ideal from fight-for-glory (in the Iliad) to self-preservation (in the Odyssey). The choice of poison, then, is a decision that further erases her bodily gender, while simultaneously rooting her in a female tradition (magic), yet also connecting her to the great Greek epic heroes.

Medea reminds the audience throughout the play that she is a woman, and that her body has determined much of her fate. She is keen to repeat that she birthed her sons, thus asserting her body’s role in the position in which she currently finds herself. Of the body and tragedy, Zeitlin notes:

>This body is permanently at odds with itself, subject to a congenital dissonance between inside and outside. Woman can never forget her body, since she experiences its inward pain, nor is she permitted to ignore the fact of its outward appearance in that finely tuned consciousness she acquires with respect to how she might seem in the eyes of others. (74)
Thus, despite her body, despite her posturing as a stereotype to act out her murderous plans, despite her acrasia before the infanticide, despite the actor’s costume and mask that would have communicated Woman, despite all this, the chorus still asks:

τάλαιν’, ὡς ἄρ’ ἦσθα πέτρος ἢ σίδα-ρος, ἀτις τέκνων
ὅν ἔτεκες ἄροτον αὐτόχει-ρι μοίραι κτενεῖς. (1279-82)

Wretched woman, how truly you are made of stone, or iron, that you will kill your children—which fruit you bore—with a fate sealed by your own hand.

It would seem, then, that Medea was spot-on when, earlier in the text, she casts off her gender, likens herself to the strongest heroes, and the most honorable men, announcing:

µηδείς µε φαύλην κάσθενη νοµίζετω
µηδ’ ἰσοχαίαν ὀλλὰ θατέρου τρόπου,
βαρεῖαν ἐχθροῖς καὶ φίλοισιν εύµενή·
tῶν γὰρ τοιούτων εὐκλεέστατος βίος. (807-10)

Let no one think that I am easy and weak, nor one to sit idly by, but I am of the opposite temper, grievous to my enemies and gracious to my friends; for the life of such like tempered men is the most highly praised.

In much the same way that she puts herself in league with Creon the father, Medea’s language here assumes an equal footing with “such like tempered men,” so worthy of praise for their willingness to act boldly. These lines clearly target the Athenian male audience who valued such men, such acts, such masculinity.

The body’s relation to the Greek stage is closely related to Zeitlin’s second principal element of the theatrical experience, theatrical space. Zeitlin discusses space specifically in terms of interior and exterior spaces, noting, “…the very business of entrances and exits, of comings and goings through the door of the house, continually establishes a symbolic dialectic between public and private, seen and unseen, open and
secret, even known and unknown” (75). The semantic field of the Greek theatrical space is, of course, much larger than just within the skēnē and outside of it, but it will be remembered that Zeitlin’s main goal is to explore the feminine in the theater, and the skēnē qua oikos (household) is a common and symbolically powerful opposition to the public space outside the house (or palace, or tent, etc.). The skēnē/oikos also reaffirms for the audience the public moment of performance itself. Concerning Euripides’ Medea, the interplay between the oikos’ interior and exterior does much to flush out Medea’s social androgyne. Zeitlin never uses the term “androgyne,” but she certainly recognizes that the theatrical spaces of inside and outside are directly related to gender relations, and that frequently there is a conflict for control of domestic space. This power struggle often causes anxiety for the masculine forces in a play-text. Typically, a female character must defend the integrity of the oikos, which, paradoxically, is a symbol of the male owner’s social worth. He owns the property and its maintenance reflects on his masculinity. In Greek tragedy, however, it is often the male who initially damages the oikos’ integrity. The woman must then take action to defend the household; Zeitlin reminds us that “as a result…of the stand she takes, the woman also represents a subversive threat to male authority as an adversary in a power struggle for raising the terrifying specter of rule by women” (77). The Medea does not deviate drastically from this pattern or from the meanings typically generated from the inside/outside relationship. Euripides, however, upends the expected semantics of theatrical space. He thus asserts Medea’s androgynous nature. The use of spatial relationships on the stage is deliberate. As Padel states, “the

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language of space is part of the tragedian’s armory, by which he lets each moment of the play suggest simultaneously different aspects of one idea” (342-3). This poetic device is effective because of the spatial language of daily life. Spaces coded as distinctly masculine or feminine would have featured strongly in the vocabulary of theatrical space for the tragedian.

Our first encounter with Medea finds her off-stage, inside the house (behind/within the skênê). From within, she weeps and wails. The house is complexly understood as both a masculine and feminine locus. The distinction is that the exterior of the house stands as a symbol of a man’s worth, his paternal fulfillment, and his ability to maintain his standing in society. The interior of the house is coded as absolutely feminine. As Lusching explains it,

> The importance of the wife and the social milieu in which she has her being, the oikos, is not only maintained but extended beyond what we can actually see, the public façade of the house (that is, the skene), into the largely imaginary space behind it, the interior where the woman holds central place and the man is (as is sometimes depicted on vases) something of an unobservant bystander.

(20)

It is no real wonder, then, that from within the house, Medea’s actions would be so femininely coded. Her first words in the tragedy, in fact, are so stereotypically feminized by Euripides that they verge on the melodramatic:

> ἰὼ, δόστανος ἑγὼ μελέα τε πόνων, ἰὼ μοί μοι, πῶς ἂν ὀλοίμαν; (96-8)

Ah, I am wretched, miserable from my distresses! Ah, me!
Why can’t I just perish?

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27 The skênê probably first appeared around 460 BCE. Wilamowitz, and Taplin after him, have argued that the [Oresteia](#) is the first surviving tragedy to use the skênê. The [Medea](#) was staged in 431 BCE.
Medea’s reaction to Jason’s infidelity is powerful, particularly against what Medea has experienced in her personal story and the events yet to unfold in this retelling of the myth. Euripides emphasizes her reaction stylistically by having Medea’s first real word (δύστανος) in sung anapests, which increases the emotional pitch of her entrance. In addition to her shrieks, Medea’s earliest lines also include an invocation to two goddesses, both of whom identify Medea with her femininity and her female body: Themis and Artemis (160). Themis is most directly associated with justice, so Medea’s calling on her, on the one hand, is quite appropriate to the story’s revenge plotline. The invocation of Artemis, on the other hand, is more significant to her bodiliness and more expected from a woman in a woman’s space. Although she’s a virgin goddess, Artemis is identified with childbirth, marriage, and the passing into womanhood.

What is most significant about Medea’s initial outbursts is the change her speech undergoes upon leaving the house. We know that Medea does not come through the skēnē doors until 214. Due to the absence of stage directions in Greek tragedies, we rely on verbal cues, and here Medea announces her arrival before launching into an extended rhesis:

Κορίνθιαι γυναῖκες, ἐξῆλθον δόµων… (214)

Corinthian women, I have come out of the house…

Having exited the house, moving from inside to out, Medea delivers the long speech, discussed above, that childbirth is a more heroic feat than any stint in battle. This speech is delivered, naturally, in the orchestra, which is very much a public space in the context of the dramatic festival, and thus a space layered with the masculine. In the context of

28 If the infanticide in the text was not Euripides’ invention, this aspect of the story was canonized by his version.
the play-text, however, the *orchestra* represents the equivalent of a front yard, which is a liminal space between public and private, between exterior and interior.\(^{29}\) The *orchestra* in the *Medea* is an androgynous space. With this speech, indeed, with all the action of the play occurring in this in-between place, the spectators are constantly reminded that the family drama taking place here in the open might be better to transpire inside the *oikos*. This creates a tension *vis à vis* gender and societal expectations throughout the tragedy. As Ruth Padel puts it, “behind the *skēnē* is an imagined space which the theater conceals but continually refers to. The important tragic act will happen unseen and mostly *within*” (345). Surely, throughout the *Medea*, the audience simply wishes that this barbarian witch would go back inside, for all of our safety.

Medea emerges, of course, because Jason has damaged the *oikos*. We have already seen that the integrity of the household was, socially, a man’s concern, but in tragedy, the woman must often defend that integrity. Here, Medea’s stepping out of her female space and into the public eye is a move to assume control of the *oikos* as a whole. It is now hers, and Jason’s abandonment has essentially transferred title to Medea. In Lusching’s simple turn, “the estrangement of Jason has made this a woman’s house” (35). The conceiving of the house as Medea’s property merges her into the male social order, while her responsibility to maintain the *oikos’* order keeps her in the female world. In effect, Medea straddles the worlds of sexual politics in classical Athens. To wit, she is out of the home without a guardian, she will multiple times conduct business with men

\(^{29}\) In his discussion of Medea and her adaptability to the conventions of the polis, Charles Lloyd makes the keen observation that, “Even the space out of which she steps has been problematized, for it is not the space of Creon’s palace which is closely identified with the center of the polis itself…but is ‘off-center’: her [oikos] is not only feminine and inner and therefore unknowable, but also, because she is [barbaros (foreign)], it is at the same time paradoxically ‘outer and alien’” (116). This analysis is useful for Euripides’ political motives and would certainly be an issue to consider while translating or staging the tragedy, but Lloyd does not seem to see the orchestra as problematized in relation to Euripides’ deliberate play with gender and Medea.
(Creon, Aegeus, and Jason), and she is publically preserving the *oikos*. On the flip side, she is a mother (a fact that she and others constantly bring up); she is repeatedly described in femininely coded terms; she is a witch; she is emotional. In short, Medea’s negotiation of male and female loci subverts her exterior gender and underlines her androgyny.

Euripides’ play on space and gender continues throughout the drama. Citing Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, and the *Hippolytus* and *Hecuba* of Euripides, Zeitlin notes of the skēnē, “men find out in tragedy that they are likely to enter that interior domain mostly at their peril” (77). Not so in the *Medea*. Instead, Medea brings the tragedy outside, to Jason. She commits the infanticide within the home, a fitting bookend, perhaps, to an act that stands in such opposition to childbirth, the symbolism of the *oikos*, and Greek womanly duty. She then publishes her deed in a most dramatic way: in Medea’s final exit out of the *oikos*, she does not enter the *orchestra*. Medea appears *ex machina*. Critics have often argued, justly, that Medea’s appearance in the Chariot of the Sun (in an unusual *deus ex machina sans deus*) is Euripides absolving her of the killing of her sons. After all, if the gods allow her to escape to Athens in this way, they must feel that justice has been served. In P.E. Easterling’s estimation, Medea’s appearance as the *deus ex machina* instead of a god, as is Euripides’ habit, is startling, for “…there is no comparatively distant and objective divine figure to speak with the voice of authority, relating these events to real life through their link with some cult or institution and thereby restoring a sense of normality after the frightful extremes of the action” (199).

30 Concerning theatrical space and Medea qua witch, Mastronarde notes her statement that Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft, lives inside her house: “in Greek cult Hecate was worshipped outdoors, in streets, and at crossroads, so Medea’s statement that the goddess dwells within her house, virtually in displacement of Hestia, conveys both an exotic transgression of the norm and a special personal intimacy” (in Euripides, 236, n. 397).
Euripides’ use of the *mēkhanē* also extends the theatrical space for Medea alone and it has an immense effect on the representation of her gender. The final scene of the play finds Medea neither inside nor outside of the *oikos*, but rather *on* it.31

In the first choral ode, the Chorus sings that the natural order of the sexes will be reversed. Women will soon be freed of the determinacy of their gender:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ἀνω ποταμών ιερῶν χωροῦσι παγαί,} \\
kαὶ δίκα καὶ πάντα πάλιν στρέφεται· \\
\text{ἀνδράσι μὲν δόλιαι βουλαί, θεῶν δ’} \\
\text{οὐκέτι πίστις ἄραρεν.} \\
\text{τὰν δ’ ἐμὸν εὐκλείαν ἔχειν βιοτὰν στρέφουσι} \\
\text{φάμαι·} \\
\text{ἐρχεται τιμᾶ γυναικεῖῳ γένει·} \\
\text{οὐκέτι δυσκέλαδος φάμαι γυναῖκας ἕξει.}
\end{align*}
\]

(410-20)

The waters flow up the holy rivers (i.e. upstream), both justice and the universe (πάντα) have turned back on themselves; men’s plans are tricks, and the honesty of the gods is no longer stable; but common report will turn my life around so that it has good fame; honor will be held by the race of women; no longer will discordant rumor grip women.

In the same way that slander will no longer hold women back, neither will femininity limit Medea. She has achieved a balanced androgyny over the course of the play, and now she exits—but she exits not into the house, not down one of the *eisodoi* to another public male space. Medea exits up and toward Athens. She transcends her *oikos* and all that it represents.

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31 The terrifying importance of Medea *ex machina* cannot be overstated. Mary Lefkowitz explains: “Of the three dramatists, it is Euripides who makes his audience most keenly aware of the gods’ interest in human affairs. Nine of his nineteen surviving plays conclude with scenes where gods speak from the stage machine; in four plays, gods speak the prologue; Iris and Lyssa appear, dramatically—and with terrifying effectiveness—in the middle of the *Heracles*. Only six plays have no gods as characters, though in four of these the audience hears about or sees a miraculous event that could only have been brought about by a god: Medea appears with the bodies of her children in the chariot of Helios…Only in two plays, the satyr play *Cyclops* and the *Phoenissae*, does no miracle occur” (103).
There are many other passages in the *Medea* that show Euripides’ awareness of the complex spatiality of his medium, but we move now to Zeitlin’s third principal element of the theatrical experience and the feminine, the plot. Zeitlin’s discussion of plot helps us to establish Medea’s androgyny in two specific ways. First, the plot is the thing that drives us through those Aristotelian checkpoints of *desis*, *lusis*, and finally *anagnōrisis*, *phobos*, and *catharsis*. We have already seen that the Medea’s plot resolution leads to an ambiguous sense of justice; the infanticidal mother is sent, with the gods’ protection, to Athens, the land of law and thought, justice and mind. As we have seen, Medea is no ordinary woman, and so that she does not conform to mortal justice should surprise no one; but we note her social negotiations of space and gender expectation as representing more than just her own mythology.

In a Barthesian move, Zeitlin explains the constant binding (*desis*) and unbinding (*lusis*), which creates a complex interweaving (*symploke*) and constitutes the fabric of the play. In this sense, we may read the act of the playwright as a feminizing process, weaving his tragedy as a seamstress her *peplos*. Euripides, it would seem, is half-way to androgynizing himself. But plot, particularly on its metaphorical loom, is also applied to the women of tragedy. One role of the feminine Other in tragedy is to scheme, to plot, to bring us to the recognition (*anagnōrisis*). It is precisely women who, in their stereotypical role, often control the intrigue that keeps the plot of a tragedy on track. In Zeitlin’s estimation,

…the same exclusion which relegates women to the inside as mistresses of the interior space equips them for deviousness and duplicity, and gives them a talent, or at least a reputation, for weaving wiles and fabricating plots, marks of their double consciousness with regard to the world of men. (79)
As we have already seen, Medea comfortably exists in both worlds (masculine and feminine), but this comfort, this ability to scheme indoors and act outdoors, is shockingly inverted by the androgyne. Euripides writes for us, in Medea, a woman who schemes, who plots, who deceives out of doors, in masculine space, but acts (the infanticide) in the house, the feminine space.\(^{32}\)

The most striking exterior trickery by Medea would have to be her bargaining with Creon. At this point in the tragedy, Medea has just come out of the house (214), but, per the plotline, Medea does not yet know about Creon’s order of exile. The audience knows of the decree from the Tutor (67-ff), but the Nurse and the Tutor agree that they should not tell Medea the news. This makes it all the more tragic when, in her first rhesis, Medea describes herself as “alone” (ἐρημος) and “stateless” (ἀπολις).

Nonetheless, Medea’s first exposure to the news of her exile comes from Creon’s own mouth, outdoors (in front of the skēnē—see above). This detail is significant because if women are duplicitous creatures in tragedy because it is “natural to her sphere of operations and the dictates of her nature” (Zeitlin, 81), then Medea, again, transcends the expectations and determinacy of her gender when she so effectively dupes Creon and outwits him.

From his first words, Creon asserts his male authority and demeans Medea as a typical woman—though he absolutely recognizes that she is no ordinary woman. When Creon despotically proclaims:

\(^{32}\) Though outside the plot of Euripides, we also know that Medea’s butchering of her brother took place in her Colchian household. At 1334-5, Jason slams Medea for having killed her brother “beside the hearth” before boarding the Argo: “κτανοῦδα γάρ δή σών κάσιν παρέστιον/τό καλλίπρωρον εἰσεβής Ἀργοῦς σκάφος.” Similarly, her inciting of the daughters of Pelias to kill their father took place inside the palace at Iolchus. The brutal murder of her brother and her role in the killing of Pelias provide two further examples of Medea carrying out masculine acts in feminine spaces, thus inverting the expected use of gendered space (indoors) and gendered action (murder).
I and I alone am the enforcer of this order…

he is both exerting his advantages as a man, and he is invoking the legal system, to which Medea, as a barbarian woman, has no recourse. Initially, Medea speaks to her masculine space:

ἐχθροὶ γὰρ ἐξιᾶσι πάντα δὴ κάλων (278)

My enemies are launched full sail…

This naval language feels out of place in a standard Greek frauensprache. Elsewhere, Medea uses nautical language (as at 258 and 769), but here, she extends the metaphor from nautical to naval by including ἐχθροὶ (“my enemies”). Such masculine language, however, she recognizes as unhelpful to her cause. Medea deliberately feminizes her speech patterns. Judith Mossman identifies several cues for “women’s speech” in her analysis of Euripides’ Electra. Mossman establishes that women characters speak differently in tragedy when they are in a group of women (when they may speak more specifically and more freely), as opposed to when they are in a mixed group. In her first speech, Electra, according to Mossman,

“[couches] her speech in particularly careful terms because she is in a mixed group, and so finds it desirable to underline her conformity with generally accepted moral thinking by using platitudes; whereas in the second speech she is in an all-female group… and so can speak more trenchantly in the absence of men. This alone characterizes her as female, since Greek tragic males have no need to change their discourse in a mixed group. (378)

Similarly, Medea’s next response to Creon progresses much like that of Mossman’s Electra:

33 ὁ βραβεύς is here translated as “enforcer,” but it carries the connotation of judge.
Ah, the woe! This is not the first time, Creon, but often my reputation has hurt me, and done me much harm! Any man who is, by nature, sound of mind, ought not to have his sons taught to be exceptionally clever; aside from any other idleness they have, they earn malevolent envy from the citizens. Let me explain: presenting a new cleverness to the unintelligent, you will seem foolish and not wise by nature; but, if you are considered in the city to be superior to those who have some special knowledge, you will come off annoying. But I, too, have a share of such a fate as this; for being clever (as I am), to some I am regarded with envy, and to others I am irksome. But I am not overly clever. And so you fear me, why? Because you might suffer something unpleasant? This is not how it is with me. Do not cower from me, Creon; I am not in such a position as to transgress the man in charge. Have you wronged me in some way? You betrothed your daughter to whom your gut told you to. It is my husband I hate. But you, I think, have done these things out of a sensible mind. And now, I do not envy that you and yours have had success. As for this marriage, I hope you continue to reap benefit. But do
permit me to live in this land. For truly, although I have
been wronged, I am subdued by your power, I will remain
silent.

Medea’s rhesis begins with a concern for how she is viewed by others (292-295). Mossman explains that Electra, too, has fear of public opinion and gossip (377), and these concerns play heavily into speech patterns in mixed company. Medea’s speech then moves to generalities, musing on the nature of being clever and foolish, which corresponds to the platitudes and the generally accepted morality that Mossman identifies. Medea degrades herself and her intellect and thus cloaks her androgyny in typical female garb, living up, in speech, to the perception of her gender. At 305, she says “ἐἰμὶ δ’ οὐκ ἄγαν σοφή” (“I am not overly clever”), before submitting herself as a woman and as a foreigner to Creon’s power. She then explains that her beef is with Jason, not Creon, and placates the ruler by congratulating him and his daughter on the marriage (309-15!)

What is so notable about this exchange, and Medea’s language in particular, is that the audience is watching her plotting and trickery. Medea is not scheming in the oikos’ dark, mysterious corners. Instead, Medea has dislocated an interior act to the exterior. She is recoding a feminine act in a masculine space. Her plotting is most glaring in the final fourteen lines of her speech. These last lines, in which she expresses not only her hate for Jason (310-11) but also her acceptance of Creon’s good fortune (311-12), are marked by dramatically shorter clauses—there are fourteen punctuated stops in as many lines; consider that there are only six such stops in the preceding eleven

34 A more accurate translation of κρείσσοντων νοκὼμενοι would be something like, “having been subdued by those who are more powerful,” but the suggestion here is clear. Medea is submitting herself, at least ostensibly, to the existing hierarchy, giving way in speech to Creon, the man in power in Corinth. My translation (“I am subdued by your power”) better reflects the submissive playacting Medea undertakes in this speech.
lines. This staccato rhythm suggests a paced speech, as though she were working out her whole plan right then and there. And she is.

At the end of her “Women’s Speech in Greek Tragedy,” Mossman wonders,

if the female can be said to have a distinctive voice in tragedy, then it might prove not only to be the voice of the Other, but one in which the audience might sometimes discern ‘the Self in the Other and the Other in the Self,’ as Greenblatt has put it, and perhaps the polarity between male and female might not only be being reinforced but also, and simultaneously, challenged. (383-4)

Medea challenges this polarity (by inverting the feminine activity of scheming and masculine space). More significantly, however, she challenges the status quo by being both masculine and feminine herself. In a way, with Medea, Euripides is inculcating the social advantage and spatial freedom of the androgyne. This freedom did not translate into Greek society in a revolutionary way, though already by the time of the Medea’s production, metic (non-citizen and non-slave) women enjoyed certain public freedoms that citizen women did not.

We will not discuss Medea’s public scheming with Jason (866-975) here for two reasons. First, she is arguing with Jason, her husband; this adds a domestic layer to the agon, which, in effect, confuses the public quality of the space (though it is the same open location where she pleaded with and plotted against Creon). Second, this scene is not relevant to Medea’s androgynous tricking vis à vis Zeitlin’s plot element. By the time Medea supplicates Jason, however disingenuously, she has already mixed her poisons, she has already worked out the details of Creon’s and his daughter’s death. Following her decision to murder the king, the princess, and ultimately her sons, Medea presumably leaves the stage into the oikos for the third stasimon (824-865). Medea has time, plot-
wise, in the house to mix her *pharmaka* and to devise the ruse she plays out with Jason. Even though she is again playacting as the weak woman, like she did with Creon, her encounter with the king is much more interesting to the plot/plotting game of tragedy, for she gives an improvisational performance, outside the home. This scene with Jason is, however, germane to Zeitlin’s fourth principal element: mimesis.

The element of mimesis in her formulation of the theatrical experience and the feminine has, like plot, a double function. Mimesis here concerns both the representation of reality on stage and the role of the actor, as a man, effectively representing a woman on the stage. For our purposes, we add a third aspect of mimesis. Recall that Zeitlin is looking to identify a feminine force in Greek tragedy, whereas we are proving Medea’s androgyny. In this way, we consider Medea’s mimetic capability to convince her husband—one who ought to know her so well—that she is just a typical, foolish woman.

The biggest hurdle Medea has to clear in convincing Jason that she had been acting like a fool (ἄφρων) is one she set up for herself. She has proven highly intelligent and calculating not only throughout the text, but also throughout her entire mythology. There is little question that Jason knows her well enough by now to know that she is not the typical Greek housewife. Foley suggests that, “for Jason, Medea is a temperamental barbarian concubine who must be cast aside for the advantages of a real Greek marriage” (77). Euripides does Jason no real service in this play, but Foley’s reading of the Argonaut seems too cursory given their history, stretching back to Colchis and the Golden Fleece. Medea’s reputation is such that Creon fears her; she has proven herself

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35 Foley’s article (1989) is really a study of Medea’s monologue on the filicide. This focused topic may explain Foley’s position on Jason, but even with this tight focus it seems to come at the expense of context provided by the tragedy itself. Through the Nurse, Creon, Aegeus, Jason, and Medea, Euripides takes pains
persuasive enough to make Pelias’ daughters commit patricide; her gifts are well known enough that Aegeus, king of Athens, believes that Medea can help him sire a child. Why would Jason, of all people, underestimate Medea so dramatically? Why would Jason, of all people, dismiss Medea out of hand as temperamental but, ultimately, sufficiently submissive that his new marriage will become a mere inconvenience for Medea? What remains for Medea is to act. She must convince Jason in her performance. We have ample information about Medea’s reputation, largely built on personal sacrifices to benefit Jason. We cannot access personal history, however; we cannot know how Medea behaves in the *oikos* when things between her and Jason are riding on the calm. We can only speculate, using the myth and its context.

A uxorious Jason would help explain Medea’s reaction to his abandoning her, but, despite Euripides’ characterization of Jason as lacking in manliness, there is no evidence in the play that Jason was the submissive partner. On the contrary, his unmanliness (ἀνανδρία) only comes out as a result of his marriage to the local princess. Medea, for her part, recognizes that she is a non-Greek, with no homeland to which she might return.

To the Chorus, Medea laments,

ἐγὼ δ’ ἔρημος ἀπολιζοσσ μοι γενικαὶ ὑποκλείζομαι
πρὸς ἄνδρος, ἐκ γῆς βαρβάρου λελησμένη,
οὐ μητέρ’, οὐκ ἀδελφόν, οὐχὶ συγγενῆ
μεθορμίσασθαι τῆσδ’ ἔχουσα σμφορᾶς. (255-8)

I myself am alone, stateless, I have suffered ill-treatment at the hand of my husband, I was taken as booty from a barbarian land; I have no mother, no brother, no kinsman at all, to whom I might shift anchorage from this disaster.

to establish Medea’s complicated reputation, and it is clear from the play that her fame is not due to a hot temper.
Medea, particularly given her infamy as a murderous witch, has all the motivation in Greece to be, in general, a submissive wife in the *oikos*. She has been in a precarious social position, often on the lam, since she and Jason left Colchis. Jason and Medea would have an easier time assimilating into Corinthian society if she were to fulfill the expectations of her gender at home. Medea has good reason to act weak and submissive when she and Jason are home on a Saturday night. Indeed, “these are…the very cultural cliché s that Medea exploits in her second scene with Jason, where she pretends to accept and conform to his notions of what a woman is like and what she should be” (Foley, 78). In context, Medea’s phony reconciliation would provide Jason with the subordinate Medea he expected when he decided to become a bigamist. Understanding Medea in this way allows Jason to accept her claims to being a typical woman as valid, as convincing. If Jason can reasonably accept her words as honest, then the audience can accept his acceptance. Medea’s playacting here works because it is rooted in a gendered expectation.

Medea asks Jason to bear with her natural impulses as a woman (“τὰς δ’ ἐμὰς οργὰς φέρειν/εἰκός σ’…”, 870-1); she has thought about her situation, and she realizes that she was being foolish and motivated by anger (“ταῦτ’ εννοηθές’ ἡσθόμην ἄβουλίαν/πολλὴν έχουσα καὶ μάτην θυμουμένη”, 882-3); after welling up at the sight of her children, she dismisses her tears as a female weakness, and she submits to Jason’s wishes (δράσω τάδ’· οὕτως σοὶ ἀπιστήσω λόγοις/γυνὴ δὲ θῆλυ καὶ δακρύοις ἔφυ”, 927-8). But it’s all an act. And yet, Jason takes her words at face value. The double mimesis in this scene—the “realism” of the exchange for the stage, and Medea’s ability to dupe Jason—only works contingent on her previous behavior in the *oikos*. Her success here,
taken with her success in bartering with Creon and Aegeus, proves her androgynous ability to move fluidly between male and female spaces.

This scene (866-975), in which Medea supplicates Jason and convinces him to take the poisoned gifts to his new bride, raises important questions about mimesis and gender. As Zeitlin reminds us, actors in the ancient theater were all men. This scene thus poses special challenges to the actor, especially given the gender issues that saturate the play. In essence, we have a male actor, playing a female character, who is not feminine (though not entirely masculine), and who now is behaving exceedingly feminine, but convincingly enough to fool her husband of several years. This situation, this mimetic moment, requires a zigzagging performance by the actor. If the actor does not play the woman well enough here at least to convince the audience that she will convince Jason, this scene risks become comedic. Nothing said is funny, but an ineffective delivery could play paratragic. With this understanding of what is at stake for the actor and character in this scene, Medea’s androgynous nature becomes more salient in other scenes. The male actor’s ability to give a solid performance as a woman competent in masculine space should be greater, as a man, than his ability to convince as a woman in any space. Thus, this scene required particular care by the performer.

Further, Zeitlin explains that, on stage, “by virtue of the conflicts generated by her social position, the woman is ambiguously defined between inside and outside, interior self and exterior identity; she is already more of a “character” than the man, who is far more limited as an actor to his public (social and political) roles” (85). In a way, a woman on the Greek stage is more real than even her masculine counterpart. Is Medea, then, due to her androgynous characteristics, more real than other women in tragedy?
No. Medea might be more ideal—more worthy of emulation—but not more real. Indeed, her exceptional character and essence prevents others from emulating her, and therefore she becomes idealized in an unexpected way; she is the out of reach goal. The problem, of course, is that androgyny was shameful in the ancient Greek social code. In “Medea’s Divided Self,” Helene Foley questions Euripides’ motivation to flip what is ostensibly a tragedy of jealousy and revenge into a “tragedy of gender.” Foley is not arguing for a tragedy about gender, but “it raises its tragic issues as a double conflict between male and female, both on stage in the external world and within Medea’s self” (77). Foley forgets one gender, the androgyne, which in the Medea, in Medea, becomes the battleground for the conflict between male and female. So, the androgynous Medea is not the ideal, but perhaps she allows Euripides to articulate his positions on sexual politics in the middle of fifth century Athens precisely because of her in-between status. Rereading the gender play in Euripides’ text helps us reconfigure Medea into her proper role as a character who deftly negotiates and manipulates the social codes of her existence.

Critically reevaluating Euripides’ move to destabilize gender on the Athenian stage, to deploy an androgynous hero into his socio-historical milieu, challenges traditional readings of the Medea myth, Euripides’ play, and how we approach the text as scholars, teachers, and as people. In 1974, Wendy Martin wrote in Women’s Studies, “if we are to build a more enlightened human community, we must blur the sharp distinction between masculine and feminine; androgyny represents an effort to eliminate this false dichotomy” (266). Medea, of course, takes advantage of her social malleability for

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36 And do not despair, Professor Martin; social media giant Facebook recently announced that users can now choose from among fifty different gender labels to help define themselves to the world. It’s a slow go
what she sees as noble, but for what many readers and viewers since have seen as evil.

The lesson we observe in her is that flexibility, adaptability, can be as beneficial to our ends as to Medea’s. Her ability to move in and out of various spaces and social roles is essentially a generator of opportunity. She selects the course, gruesome though it is, that suits her code of honor. Medea is a foreigner; she is a witch; she is feared; she has been tossed away. It is only in the androgynous space that Medea can ensure her survival. It is only in the androgynous space that we can fully appreciate Medea’s plight, her decisions, and her mythology.

**Looking Past the Infanticide**

Is Medea thus such a “bad woman?” She does, of course, commit infanticide, but her actions can be seen as justified by the gods, for at the end of the tragedy, Medea appears *ex machina*, the only example of a mortal to do this on the (extant) Greek stage. The mēchanē, always reserved for immortals, now supports this foreign witch, ready to leave for Athens in the chariot of the Sun. It would appear that Medea is the hero despite her actions, and despite any sympathy we finally feel for Jason at the end of the play. In the Medea, Euripides upends the notion of heroism, and what we see in Jason only supports that fact that Euripides actually sympathizes with his women. Similarly, “he has changed Jason too, of course. In earlier legend Jason was the great hero who won the Golden Fleece; here he is an ordinary, middle-aged man, with ambitions for respectability and a concern for civilized values” (March, 38). Jason is no better than Medea in the tragedy, nor is he worse. They are both, harkening back to Hegel’s phrase, full of

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since we’re forty years on, but people tend to find a world understood outside of convenient binaries to be threatening.
“exceptional aspects of personal sensibility.” In the final analysis, Medea’s actions are merely the logical extension of an already morally problematic Greek ethos: love your friends; hurt your enemies. Of course her actions are despicable, but to fail to look past the plot’s action is to fail Euripides. The catalyst of the infanticide complicates the text and begs readers to read between the lines. Learning that Medea kills her sons and then shutting down the dialogue with the text is poor reading. Indeed, it was a desire to explore the cause/motive to this act that activated Annenskii’s reading, and therefore his translation, of the play.

Not only did Annenskii read voraciously every piece of scholarship about Euripides, but he also, as we know, translated all nineteen plays, he kept a bust of Euripides on his bookcase, and “most of all he was apparently interested in the fate of Euripides in the works of the dramatists of new Europe, a question which was nearly impossible to study with the resources of Petersburg’s libraries alone” (Setchkarev, 29). We must now consider Annenskii’s translation and how his translation offered an interpretation of the tragedy every bit as cutting-edge as the play itself was in 5th century Athens. Ultimately, this is a question of legacy. Not only the legacy of Euripides, whose reputation we have investigated here, but the legacy of Annenskii. Annenskii’s reputation as a poet is well established. But he was much more complex than his lyrical output. His place in Russia’s Silver Age, however we choose to define him (Symbolist? Pre-Acmeist?), cannot be understood without an examination of his translation work. Specifically, by looking closely at his Medea translation, we will find that he was well ahead of his time, academically and poetically.
Chapter 4

As we move to consider the Russian translation of Euripides’ Medea, we must not overlook the reading public in late Imperial Russia, as this has an effect on translators and how they approach their tasks. We have already established in Chapter 2 that, under Ivan Delianov, the Counter Reform of 1884 thoroughly reinvigorated the Classics in Russia, essentially shelving Saburov’s changes and picking up the Tolstoi System where it had been left. Of course, the goal of the Tolstoi System was to suppress revolutionary thought in Russia’s schools by keeping students busy with memorization of vocabulary and the parsing of verbs, but the net of the Tolstoi System and Delianov’s counter-reform is that Russia’s well-educated public could read (or at least trudge through) Greek and Latin. This is not to suggest that every copy clerk in Russia would read Horace for pleasure, but the educated would have had a solid familiarity with ancient source texts.

Adrian Wanner raises a congruent issue in his examination of Baudelaire in Russia, and the skill of the addressee is not insignificant to our object, as well. Wanner explains that for the most part, Russian translations of Baudelaire did not intend to open the Frenchman to Russian readers:

Since a knowledge of French was widespread in educated nineteenth-century Russian society, virtually all Russian readers of Baudelaire…were able to read him in the original…The situation changed in the Soviet period, when a knowledge of French could no longer be taken for granted even among [the educated] …Most [modernist] Russian poets who translated Baudelaire did not do it with the intention of rendering a service to readers who did not know French. They saw the translation of poetry as a challenge sui generis and as a worthy task for its own sake… (5)
Knowledge of French was certainly much more commonplace than knowledge of Greek, but the target audience was not unfamiliar with Greek tragedy and probably had a better grasp of the topic than the general American public today. What, then, did Annenskii hope to accomplish in translating? We know that he sought to bridge the gap between Euripides and those who did not possess the language skills necessary to activate the potential of the Greek text—educated Russians could read the Greek, at least to an extent, but as a pedagogue, Annenskii realized that most of his countrymen would not engage the Greek, particularly if a Russian version was available. Further, we must remember of Annenskii that he was not a new poet when he began his translation of the Medea; in fact, he had already published ten of Euripides’ tragedies before his first volume of verse, Tikhie pesni (Quiet Songs), appeared in 1904, one year after his Medea. Annenskii, however, does much more than craft a Russian version of the tragedy.

Educated, Educator

While Innokentii Annenskii would be the perfect poster-boy for the good aspects of the Tolstoi System of classical education, Annenskii, as he does in his poems, evades the critic. Annenskii certainly was a success story in terms of his education and training, but the poet did not actually go through Russia’s public schools. Annenskii’s homeschooling clearly prepared him according to current curricular trends. Although Annenskii completed one year at a high-school in Saint Petersburg, and although he did, overall, extremely well, Nikolai, Innokentii’s brother, objected to the Russian public school system; Nikolai educated his younger brother at home. Although Annenskii was

37 We may place Annenskii in contrast with, for example, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, who also translated from Greek tragedy, but did so strictly as a burgeoning poet, perhaps to help find his own aesthetic.
under the guardianship and influence of his older brother, a liberal publisher, this does
not mean that Innokentii became like his brother. On the contrary,

the two brothers were completely dissimilar both in their ideology and view of life. Active and unreflective, Nikolai was a typical man of the 1860s whose characteristic ideology was utilitarianism and mistrust of poetry. Throughout this time Annenskii was writing only verses, which suggests the degree of difference between his own and his brother’s views. Yet, the populist atmosphere in his older brother’s family did not pass without leaving its traces on Annenskii. (Gitin, 35)

Perhaps the bigger influence on Annenskii’s poetic sensibilities, and, ultimately on his decision to translate Euripides over Sophocles or Aeschylus, was his sister-in-law/cousin (see Chapter 2), Aleksandra Annenskaia, a famous author of children’s books, and to a lesser extent his two older sisters, Maria and Lyubov’; in Gitin’s estimation, “the feminine atmosphere of the house affected him deeply, for his writings show an attentive and compassionate attitude toward the fate of women” (35). Euripides’ plays are rife with the same such compassion and concern for the position of women. Nikolai’s decision to pull Innokentii from public schools, let us not forget, would have corresponded with the changes instituted by Dmitry Tolstoi. We also recall that Tolstoi appointment began in 1866, when Innokentii was ten, and he remained the Minister of Education until after Annenskii completed his university degree in 1879. The details of Nikolai’s disapproval of the Russian education (read Tolstoi) system are not known, but we may conclude that he did not object to the curriculum itself, for Innokentii was more than adequately prepared for university level studies in philology.

However much Annenskii seems to have benefited from the curriculum devised by the Tolstoi system, his home-schooling kept him from becoming a victim to the
prevailing pedagogies under this educational reform. It seems clear, too, that whether he thought much about it in his adolescence, issues of teaching effectiveness concerned Annenskii during University and after. During Annenskii’s “Kiev Period” (1890-1893), the Russian tried to implement several pedagogical changes at the Pavel Galagan College, which he directed. Others rejected these changes, and many of his suggestions were never much considered at his school. This resistance to his good ideas impacted Annenskii psychologically, and he was not happy in Kiev. He did, however, write several important—important for us, as they were ignored at his time—and radical pedagogical treatises. In one of these statements, published in the journal, Russkaia Shkola, Annenskii called for a reform of classical education, arguing against the rote learning propounded by the Tolstoi system. Annenskii felt that “Greece and Rome should come alive instead of becoming grammatical systems” (Setchkarev, 24).

Annenskii’s ideas on how best to teach foreign languages, especially the classical languages, help to inform us about his Euripidean project. Annenskii was on the verge of beginning his translations of the tragedian during his Kiev Period, and a close look at his pedagogical and ideological positions at this time help us to understand how he, initially at least, approached the task of carrying Euripides over into Russian. But Annenskii’s Medea is more than a Russian version of the Greek. Annenskii made an impressionistic, interpretive version of the source-text. In this way, Annenskii marries his two worlds (poetry and philology); for this reason we here study his Medea in order to understand him better as a major 20th century literary figure.

The paucity of scholars who have commented on Annenskii’s translations of tragedy is surprising, and shockingly few critics have considered the translation of
classical works during the Silver Age generally. In her 1985 doctoral thesis, Catriona Kelly does offer the important observation that translations from Greek and Latin at this time looked only to educate: “there were literal versions of texts published in critical editions as supplements to the commentary... [and] there were versions for schools: cribs to classical texts...Their purpose was functional: they were in prose, and had no literary pretensions” (144). We should bear this in mind as we critically reevaluate Annenskii’s Medea, for he clearly breaks from translations of the academic and scholastic sorts.

Innokentii Annenskii’s Euripidean project aimed to expose Russia to his cherished playwright, and he wanted to bring the vitality of the Greek to Russian readers, to update Euripides for his generation—today this would be standard practice but Annenskii was criticized at the time for “modernizing” Euripides.

The Poet-Hellenist

The majority of Annenskii commentators laud him for his contribution to classical studies. While some offer more praise than others, few dissenting voices sound off against the man’s scholarly work. Catriona Kelly, whose work on Annenskii we discussed earlier, is one of these critics who view Annenskii’s academic work to have “fed off the scholarly tradition, rather than contributing to it, and was directed at a lay audience” (1985^2 10). Kelly sees, thus, most of the comments by such scholars as Setchkarev and Karlinsky as full of “undue awe;” while she may be correct in her assessment that most of the poet’s critical work did not conform to an especially academic style (Rudich takes the same position), we may gain much from his professional output. Perhaps, too, Kelly simply misses the point of Annenskii’s criticism.
Janet Tucker, who views Annenskii’s scholarly efforts as both important and as signs of various specialties in language and literature, explains that Annenskii “was a gifted critic whose poetic talents endowed his critical writings with an additional, sensitive dimension…[and that his] critical approach was psychological and subjective rather than analytical in a formalist sense” (61). Indeed, we know that Annenskii wanted the classics to come alive for students (see above)—he likely had a similar desire for his scholarship. Always the pedagogue, hoping to reach an educated but lay audience would be in keeping with his pedagogy. We should not expect jargon-filled, hyper-specialized work from him.

Janet Tucker adds that his collections of essays, his *Kniga otrazhenii* and his *Vtoraia kniga otrazhenii* (Book of Reflections; Second Book of Reflections) “are aptly named for, in a sense, all of the writers with whom Annenskij dealt were only reflectors for his ideas, media for his views on art and its relation to the artist, particularly the poet” (68). Such impressionism in criticism, on the one hand, should not necessarily detract from the work (see e.g., Nabokov’s literary criticism, which seems to draw as much on his own intelligence and intuition as any literature review of his topic), and, on the other hand, using a critical essay primarily to propound one’s own theories and ideas is certainly not unknown to the contemporary literary critic. Such “lay language” in Annenskii’s scholarship only underscores his ideas on art and the construction of poetry: Annenskii “insisted that the word was the basic building-unit of poetry and that ‘the most terrible and powerful word, i.e. the most enigmatic—may well be the most humdrum, everyday word’” (Pyman, 327-8). It is precisely in his concern for a “lay audience,”
borne out of his primary role as a “teacher, translator, and populariser” (Kelly, 10) that we may begin to understand why and how Annenskii translated.

Kelly, further, seems to take issue with the Russian Symbolists’ approach to translation in general. Particularly disgruntled by their translations of classical texts, Kelly expresses several concerns about not only the quality but also the breadth of these translations, and her criticism targets Annenskii equally. Kelly, though, seems to overlook those facts that do not allow her to condemn Annenskii and his qualifications to be remembered as a classicist. Kelly bemoans the lack of Symbolist translations from obscure ancient sources. While Bacchylides, whom both Ivanov and Annenskii translated, is not unknown, he is no Homer. Similarly, Alcaeus is no Sappho, but Ivanov translated both Lesbian poets. Finally, if such lyric poets do not satisfy Kelly’s need for obscurity, why does she fail to mention Annenskii’s article, “Iz nabliudenii nad iazykom Likofrona” (“From Observations on the Language of Lycophron”), a 3rd century BCE Alexandrian poet of monumental obscurity? Further, no less a light than Viacheslav Ivanov claimed that Annenskii was the Russian authority on Euripides. Annenskii’s concern for his research and the Classical world continued unabated until his death.

38 Harry Thurston Peck explains that Lycophron “was the author of an extant poem in 1474 iambic lines, entitled Cassandra or Alexandra, in which Cassandra is made to prophesy the fall of Troy, with numerous other events. The obscurity of this work is proverbial, and it is filled with obsolete words and long compounds. Among the numerous ancient commentaries on the poem, the most important are the scholia of Isaac and John Tzetzes, which are far more valuable than the poem itself” (L.11). I would suggest that such a topic is not for the amateur classicist and that Kelly ignores those aspects of Annenskii’s work that do not jive with her argument.

39 Viacheslav Ivanov was an unquestionably well trained and erudite classicist who wrote two dissertations on classical issues, one on Roman tax companies, another entitled Dionysus and Pre-Dionysianism. Vasily Rudich explains, “Ivanov was a man of extraordinary learning, indeed one of the most learned people in the history of Russian culture. His professional training was formidable. Having started his scholarly work as a Roman historian, he joined Theodor Mommsen’s famous seminar at the University of Berlin in 1886 (and studying under Momsen would have surely put him in the good company of such philologists as Willamowitz). The great teacher was pleased with the young and promising foreigner. Ivanov recollects in his poetic diary: ‘That happy day sarcastic Mommsen/Praised me with a smile’…After a year of studying Sanskrit under de Saussure, he arrived in Paris and delivered in 1903 a series of lectures on the religion of Dionysus at the École Supérieure des Sciences Sociales. These lectures enjoyed great success” (275-77).
Annenskii died on his way to deliver a lecture, “The Taurean Priestess in Euripides, Ruccelai, and Goethe,” to the Society of Classical Philology. Such a lecture points to the broad, comparative capabilities of Annenskii, and hardly seems the work of a novice, at least not when taken alongside the rest of his non-poetic output. Even if “Annenskii’s criticism was intended to interest the Russian public in Greek and Latin literature” (Kelly 1985, 120), this does not necessarily indicate a low quality on the part of his criticism. Should we see it as a liability to want to reach a wide audience? We can thus accept that, while Annenskii’s scholarship may have suffered from a certain level of impressionistic subjectivity, he possessed a first-rate critical eye, and his numerous scholarly articles did considerably more than “feed off the scholarly tradition, rather than contributing to it.”

The man wrote on a wide array of topics, from ancient Greek literature and culture to modern French poetry. He also penned numerous articles and book reviews for pedagogical journals.

As mentioned, Annenskii’s Kiev Period was fecund. He wrote many reviews, pieces of criticism, began his translation of the Bacchae (Vakkhanki, published in 1894), and published the so-called “Pedagogical Letters.” His various “Pedagogical Letters” were partly a product of what he had hoped would be a comfortable job at a comfortable school. Following a very influential trip to Italy in 1890, Annenskii took a post as director at the Pavel Galagan College, a small private school for advanced students. Classics found themselves in the Pavel Galagan curriculum, and Annenskii took the job with the hope of putting to practice some of his educational theories, particularly with regards to language study. Vladimir Gitin describes both Annenskii’s ideas about teaching and the consequences these ideas brought:
he substantiated his views on teaching methodology, including the role of languages in humanitarian education; the aesthetic upbringing of students; and the development of independent thinking. In 1893 he was forced to leave Galagan College because of some differences concerning teaching methods between him and the other teachers. He moved back to St. Petersburg and was immediately appointed director of the Eighth High School, where he taught until 1896. (37)

Although he met with too much resistance to apply these theories in full, he did disseminate his ideas in Russkaia Shkola (Russian School, 1890, 1892). As Setchkarev describes Annenskii’s position, “he is against mechanical learning by heart ... instead he wants a ‘living study,’ a personal approach to literature which would make it part of the student’s life” (24). I shall pass over mentioning that this stance flies in the face of the Tolstoi System. Specifically with respect to language instruction, Annenskii felt that Ancient Greece and Rome should come alive for the student. In fact, as a testament to Annenskii’s belief that the classics should not be consigned to stale grammars and parsing exercises, he directed his own translation of the Rhesus in 1893 at his school. Anecdotal evidence shows that this project was a huge success; Valentin Krivich (Annenskii’s son), in his “Innokentii Annenskii po semeinym vospominaniiam i rukopisnym materialam,” observes that staging Annenskii’s Rhesus did more to excite the gymnasium’s students’ interest in Greek than any standard classroom activity. To anyone who has stood before a secondary school classroom, this is hardly a surprise.

According to Annenskii, too, the student should strive to master the ancient languages in order to know the poetry in its original tone and tenor. As Janet Tucker explains, Annenskii “maintained that it was impossible to know a language without

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40 Annenskii felt the same about modern languages, and “in his pedagogical writings, Annenskij stressed the importance of the spoken language for mastery of the written word, stating that the oral and written word are intimately connected” (Tucker, 66).
having studied its poetry, asserting that the converse of this was also true” (66). Based on this belief, Annenskii naturally had to consider translation—its utility, its merits, and its problems.

**Source to Target, Target to Source**

Annenskii felt that translation should not consist of word-for-word transposition. In his first “Pedagogical Letter,” Annenskii argues that “a real translation is the conveyance of ideas, but the ideas are enclosed in the context, in the harmonious combination of words” (qtd. in Setchkarev, 25). Vladimir Gitin offers a similar reading from the *Kniga otrazhenii*, stating, “Annenskii saw a work of art itself as ‘a kind of mysterious symbol’ that one can ‘solve’ only by responding to the thoughts and stimuli of a text with one’s own thoughts; in the process art is filled with a new content that corresponds to one’s particular experience and historical epoch” (37). More interesting than the obvious Barthesian overtones here, is how much these quotes draw out for us the extent to which Annenskii anticipates Michael Riffaterre’s theory of translation. In his “Transposing Presuppositions on the Semiotics of Literary Translation,” which appeared in *Texte*, nearly a century after Annenskii’s “Pedagogical Letter,” Riffaterre argues that literary translation must render both meaning and significance. The literary text requires a double decoding, at the level of both systemic structure and of its component parts. This decoding too must be translated in a way that will induce the reader of that translation to perform likewise a double decoding. The signals guiding readers in such a decoding in the original must be reproduced in the translation…[I will] propose the view that in order to palliate the fact that words translated term for term only

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41 It should be clear to the reader by now that Annenskii was ahead of his time on many fronts (poetically, making way for the Acmeists; academically, seeing the feminism in Euripides long before others; in translation theory, anticipating post-structuralist theory).
Riffaterre’s theory about literary translation is not, of course, without other precedents. To cut through the jargon of this quote reveals, essentially, Roman Jakobson’s “dominant.” Jakobson identifies the “dominant” as the essential component of a literary system, and with particular attention to verse. Jakobson states, “[verse] possess its own hierarchy of superior and inferior values and one leading value, the dominant, without which (within the framework of a given literary period and a given artistic trend) verse cannot be conceived and evaluated as verse” (6). It is precisely the “dominant” that makes up the crux of Riffaterre’s double-decoding, and, then, of course, translating the “dominant” is essential, for not re-encoding the “dominant” into a translation leaves but the shell of the source-text. For Annenskii, whether he was transposing the “dominant” or double-decoding and double-re-encoding, he saw the benefit in bringing to life the thrust of the original for those who were not specialists or, perhaps, for those who did not have the ideal language training.

For Annenskii, translating the original’s verve was the only real way to translate faithfully. As Armelle Goupy reminds us, “Annenskij met en garde contre la fidélité illusoire de traductions qui se veulent strictment littérales” (“Annenskii warns against the fake fidelity of translations that fancy themselves strictly literal”) (39). And so Annenskii’s students remained ever in his thoughts, and his approach to translation reflects this concern. As Adrian Wanner puts it, in his Baudelaire in Russia, Annenskii’s “aim is to reproduce the ‘impression’ of the translated poem rather than to reconstruct it as a sum of constituent elements. As a consequence, he tended to be rather free in his approach” (102). Such a method of translation is, thus, necessary to the Russian’s goal of
bringing a lay audience as close to the original as possible, which goal reveals itself as both part and parcel of his interpretation of the text; in the case of Medea, this means his sympathetic view of the heroine despite her heinous actions.

Is this, though, a viable methodology? Can Innokentii Annenskii expect to lead readers—be they students, colleagues, poets, or someone with an interest but no expertise—to Euripides? In his study of Charles Baudelaire’s reception and “Russification,” Wanner finds that, yes, Annenskii’s approach is successful: with French poetry, at least. Following a thorough analysis of Baudelaire’s “La Cloche fêlée” and Annenskii’s Russian translation, he concludes that “while Annenskii’s translation may seem inexact in many respects it nevertheless manages to convey successfully the aesthetic frisson of Baudelaire’s original” (109). But how do Euripides’ works hold up? Does Annenskii capture the striking modernism and powerful psychology of Euripides as he does with Baudelaire’s “aesthetic frisson?”

Various scholars make passing comments about Annenskii’s translations of Euripides, but none of them devote any analysis to his translations. Catriona Kelly provides a dozen or so pages to Annenskii’s Hippolytus, from which she makes various conclusions about Annenskii’s classical translations generally (on which more later), and Armelle Goupy’s doctoral thesis, L’Euripide russe, is an extended discussion of Annenskii’s and others’ translations of the Greek. Kelly claims that Goupy’s work “will undoubtedly be the basis of all future study of Annenskii’s Euripides’ translations” (139).

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42 It is interesting to note that Annenskii’s “Staryi kolokol” his Russification of Baudelaire’s bell, which includes a shift in scene from Paris to Petersburg, prefigures some of his ideas about contemporary poetry. In his article, “O sovremennom lirizme,” Annenskii, in a way, deposes the French: “Gde nam franszuzov? —V nas eshche slishkom mnogo stepi, skifskoi liubvi k prostoru” (“What good are the French to us? There is still in us too much of the steppe, too much of the Scythian love for space”) (304).
This has not come to pass, as no other work has focused on Annenskii’s Euripides save the occasional comment; further, Goupy’s thesis seems not to exist.43

Among the comments that do pop up in unexpected places, however, is Michael Green’s explanation that “Annenskii’s translations sometimes upset purists by introducing the piquant anachronisms and vivid impressionistic stage directions we find in his own plays” (248). Additionally, Janet Tucker provides the following in a footnote: “[Annenskii] did not strive for accuracy in his translations, for he modernized the language of the original and added many observations in the margins; his renditions were modern versions of Euripides” (115, n. 11). Gitin adds that “[Annenskii] was often, and not without reason, accused of modernizing Euripides” (36). The careful reader will find a handful of other, similar comments about Annenskii’s translations, but we note the surprising lack of any mention of Annenskii’s translations (his technique, their reception, etc.) in the 1969 Soviet edition of his two-volume Tragediya. Since Kelly’s few pages in 1986, though, no one has made more than the occasional and, at this point, stock statement about his life’s true work: to make Euripides available and readable to Russians who had not mastered ancient Greek.

43 Indeed, her dissertation is not indexed in the MLA International Bibliography, nor does it appear in the Dissertation Abstracts Index. At this writing, no electronic record of Goupy’s work exists, it is not available through WorldCat, and seems to be generally out of the reach of the American scholar. After repeated requests for the dissertation went unreturned from the Sorbonne, where Goupy supposedly wrote her thesis, it was discovered by my dissertation chair, Adrian Wanner, on a trip to Paris, that the Bibliothèque Nationale has no record of the thing. It seems clear that, although she published an article on Annenskii’s translation method in 1968, Goupy’s dissertation was never completed, and so the contemporary researcher is left only with the unfulfilled promise of the study, as happens. Kelly does cite to Goupy’s thesis, though, especially in chapter 3 of her own dissertation. When I contacted Professor Kelly in 2007, she responded: “I don’t think I have a copy of this thesis myself (only extracts at best – also, I recently ‘purged’ all my dissertation materials, it now being 20 years, so may have disposed of what I had)” (Personal Correspondence, Mar. 19, 2007). But, many thanks are due to Adrian Wanner. Professor Wanner was in Paris for the Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, but he still took the time to inquire after this ghost thesis in Paris.
As mentioned, our best source on Annenskii’s method of translation, aside from piecing together a theory from scattered comments, is Armelle Goupy’s “L’art de traduire selon Annenskij” (1968). Goupy spends a dozen pages delineating, as best she can, Annenskii’s method, though even she concedes, unlike the translation ideas of Annenskii’s contemporary, Valerii Briusov, “les vues d’Annenskij sont restées dans l’ombre” (“the views of Annenskii have remained obscure”) (39). This is a difficult project; as Kelly notes, “despite the importance of translation to the Russian Symbolists, none wrote a treatise on it, or evolved a theory of translation” (1985, 146-7). The Symbolists exchanged ideas on translation, but this provides us with little more than guiding principles, and “the Symbolists’ methodology of translation was not systematised; it depended on their definition of language. Like the French Symbolists, the Russian Symbolists defined poetry as ‘musical’…it was the non-visual, emotional qualities of language which could not be analysed intellectually” (Kelly 1985, 147-8). This means, in effect, that most of the Symbolists put more effort into the meter and sound effects of the original than in carrying over the literal sense of the original. Thankfully, Goupy’s excellent article goes a long way to shed light on Annenskii’s approach. Indeed, she devotes more attention to his Medea than any other study until now.

In her article, which, according to Kelly, is a “digest of many of the most important points in the [mystery] thesis” (138, n. 2), Goupy states that for Annenskii, “l’objet de la traduction, ce ne sont pas seulement les mots du texte original, mais sa <<musique>>” (“the purpose of the translation is not simply the words from the source text, but its ‘music’”) (40). She continues, “L’accent est mis par Annenskij sur le fait que
ces déterminations [metriques et rhythmiques] sont subordonnées à l’intelligence de l’unité interne de l’œuvre” (“The stress is placed by Annenskii on the fact that these choices [of rhythm and meter] are subordinated to the understanding of the internal unity of the work”) (40). In keeping with his various avant-garde qualities, Annenskii seemed tapped into a Barthesian understanding of textual production via “philology”:

Par <<travail philologique>>, en effet, Annenskij n’entend pas seulement l’utilisation d’une édition critique du texte original; il voudrait encore que le traducteur soit capable de contribuer à la constitution de ce texte…En bref, le <<travail philologique>> suppose le recours à toutes les disciplines susceptibles d’apporter information et contrôle…Ainsi le traducteur est requis de considérer l’œuvre sous son aspect statique pour projeter sur elle, de l’extérieur, le maximum de lumière, mais sa démarche essentielle consiste, se plaçant en son centre, à l’appréhender dans son movement. (41)

By ‘philological work,’ in effect, Annenskii does not mean only the using a critical edition of the source-text; he would yet prefer that the translator be able to contribute to the composition of the text…In brief, the ‘philological work’ presumes the resorting to all disciplines sensitive to supplying information and control…Thus, the translator must consider the work by its static aspect in order that he might project onto it, from the outside, the maximum amount of light, but, placing himself at its center, his essential approach consists in the capturing of its movement.

We will return to Goupy later in this chapter, but she concludes:

Ainsi Annenskij définit-il ce qu’on pourrait appeler l’ascèse du traducteur. Contrainte souvent féconde pour l’artiste qui trouve dans cet effort de soumission active à son modèle l’impulsion qui le mène à la création de procédés d’art nouveaux, inspirées par l’œuvre étrangère et conformes aux exigencies de sa langue de de sa personnalité. (53)

Thus, Annenskii lays out what one could call the askesis of the translator. Constraint often fertilizes for the artist, who finds in this effort of active submission to his model, the impetus that brings him to the creation of new artistic
techniques, inspired by the foreign work and conforming to the exigencies of his language and his personality.

Before getting into the translation itself, it is advisable to consider Annenskii’s own view of his Euripides translation from the introduction to his Teatr Evripida (1906): “Rabota moia nad Evripidom byla strogo filologicheskoi, v chem mozhet ubedit’ sia vsiakii, kto znaet tekst Evripida i sam rabotal nad kritikoi teksta voobshche” (“My work on Euripides was strictly philological, of which anyone, who knows Euripides’ text and who himself has done work on a critical text generally, can be convinced”) (vi). Of course, we know from Goupy that “strictly philological” should be taken with a grain of salt; elsewhere Annenskii contradicts this strictly academic approach. In his “Razbor stikhotvornogo perevoda liricheskikh stikhotvorenii Goratsiia P. F. Porfirova” (1904), he says: “Leksicheskaia tochnost’ chasto daet perevodu lish’ obmanchivuiu blizost’ k podlinniku,—perevod iavliaetsia sukhim, vymuchennym, i za detaliami teriaetsia peredacha kontseptsi p’esy” (“Lexical precision often gives a translation merely an illusory proximity to the original—such a translation comes off dry, unnatural, and the transmission of the concept of the play gets lost in the details”) (2). In his Medea, Annenskii threads the translation needle: he brings his philological rigor, his translational askesis, to bear on the musicality and theme of Euripides (the “concept of the play”), and the process results in a profoundly sympathetic and revolutionary reading of the tragedy.

Infanticide or Patricide: Annenskii’s Medea

Innokentii Annenskii’s translation of the Medea appeared in the Zhurnal Ministerstvo Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia, in 1903, just one year after his Hippolytus. Among the issues we must keep in mind when looking at his Medea is Annenskii’s
sensitivity as a reader. We have already discussed the emotive and psychological impressionism of Annenskii’s criticism and scholarship; the following passage from his critical introduction to the Medea, “Tragicheskaia Medeia” (Tragic Medea”), exemplifies what Varneke saw as “the artistic reflection of the play in the soul of the poet, which is blended with that of a philologist who is able to transmute the fruits of knowledge into works of art” (Setchkarev, 155): “The art of the poet consists in preserving the correct measure in the doses of suffering which he forces us to experience, because it cannot bring about too sharp a contraction of the nerves without damage to the aesthetic influence” (Annenskii, qtd. in Setchkarev, 157). This quotation also gives us an insight into Annenskii’s relationship with Medea. He clearly sympathizes with Medea to an unusual degree, and applauds Euripides for feeling the same compassion for the heroine, though Euripides is coy about his alliance. Annenskii’s grateful words about being spared undue suffering, beyond any interesting discussion they may spark about his view of Aristotle, call to mind the sympathy he felt toward the fate of women. By the time Annenskii graduated from high-school, he had written a dramatic poem about Mary Magdalene, “Magdalina.” The parallels between his biblical heroine and Euripides’ Medea are striking, and we may identify in these similarities an intriguing pattern for his choices in subject, including his choice to translate Euripides in the first place, a tragedian who is full of sympathetic female figures. Annenskii’s “Magdalina” is “based on the story of Mary Magdalene’s passionate love for Christ. In Annenskii’s poem the heroine, already mad, perishes at sea, lured there by the ghost of Christ, who promises her eternal love” (Gitin, 36). His Magdalene is not at all the only unfortunate woman dragged to sea for the promise of eternal love; while his Magdalene perishes on the water,
Medea will perish in exile. Neither must the madness caused by a passionate love be overlooked.

What follows focuses on three major passages from Euripides and from Annenskii’s translation. These will stand as salient examples of Annenskii’s approach to the Medea. We will consider: the prologue-monologue (lines 1-48 in the Greek); the first stasimon (lines 410-445); and the first messenger rhesis (1136-1230). The prologue-monologue will be of particular interest to us, for the opening speeches of Greek tragedy are notoriously more poetic than other speech acts in a tragedy, more difficult, and, of course, the first contact anyone ever has with the plays. Due to the complete lack of stage direction and descriptions of setting in the Greek, the prologue-monologue, as well as the other passages, will also prove to be interesting litmus tests for the translator’s presence in his product. In addition to the opening speech, I will consider one messenger speech, and one choral ode from the Medea. Much scholarship has examined the messenger speech, and we can safely say that the Euripidean messenger speech is unique among the Greek tragedians. Edith Hall has remarked that “Euripides’ gift for narrative is perhaps clearest in his ‘messenger speeches’, vivid mini-epics of exciting action” (xxxiv). We have already examined Euripides’ modernity, so we will not revisit the finer points of this here, but his themes, characters, and language stand out from those of Aeschylus or Sophocles for their irreverence, their psychologies, and their pathos. Indeed,

when Euripides wrote for the stage, traditions of the drama were fixed, but he modified the conception of the character of tragedy and comedy. He does not, like Aeschylus, represent his plays necessarily from the religious point of view, nor like Sophocles, in the methodical development of the legendary subjects. He even sacrifices unity to gain
variety. His chief aim is to bring the language of tragedy more closely to that of modern life. (Marston, 5).

The prologue-monologue and the messenger speech pose a similar challenge to the translator, and the two passages, though vastly different in length, are much more similar to one another than the chorus, but we will look at these passages for several reasons, discussed below. As for the choral odes, they break from the main poetry of the tragedy by introducing new themes, new and complex meters, and they are marked by a heightened poetic flourish that tests the translator in various ways. The close reading of a choral ode is advisable because of the shift (in Greek) of meter, tone and language, and themes. How the translator handles the chorus can reveal much about how he views his role as translator. In short, the chorus in a Greek tragedy is more poetically charged than even the rest of the play and it is here that Annenskii identifies and preserves the “aesthetic frisson” of Euripides. Although not speaking specifically of a Greek chorus, Peter Green says of translating poetry,

the physical shape and texture of word-pattern used by the poet, the associative or emotive qualities inherent in his imagery—these, no less than mere denotative ‘meaning,’ have to be dealt with and, somehow, reproduced. Clearly, the translator faced with a task of this delicacy and magnitude is bound to betray his own formative influences more obviously than anyone dealing in the relatively neutral and viable medium of prose. (187-8)

Of course, the whole of Greek tragedy is in verse, but the chorus, with its many and various meters all blending together, is a unique beast that pushes translators in unusual ways.

As discussed in the Introduction, my analysis of Annenskii’s translation of Euripides does not test the poet-translator’s grammatical finesse and lexicon. Such
pedantry is not productive, at least not vis à vis the present project. To avoid such scholastic nit-picking and still to provide a thorough analysis of the translations, both against the original Greek and with a comparative purview to tease out of the translation clues about their place in Russia’s Silver Age, we will focus on certain passages.

Before we look directly at Euripides and his Russian afterlife, we should consider the verse contours of the Greek tragic form. Broadly speaking, Greek tragedy is composed in iambic trimeter with the exception of the choral odes, which shift into the difficult dactylo-epitritic metrical system. The iambic trimeter in Greek consists of three feet of two iambics each. The Greek iambic metron contains an initial syllaba anceps, which can create heavy, that is, trochaic pentameters. The tragic iambic trimeter of Euripides schematizes thus:

\[
\text{x} - \text{u} - | \text{x} - \text{u} - | \text{x} - \text{u} - \quad 44
\]

Resolution can occur in the even elements (though resolution of the tenth element appears only in later Euripides); regardless, only 75 resolutions occur in over 1000 trimeters in the Medea, for an infrequency of about 7%. Because of the possibility of the trochaic (iambic) line in Euripides, his trimeter allows for great variety and great play in the weight of the line. To wit, 54.1% of the prologue-monologue is of balanced (4 shorts) to very heavy (2 shorts) weight. The dactylo-epitritic system, which makes up the choral meters, is a major departure from the iambic lilt of the main action of the play, and instead has a dactylic feel, to which the cretic metra give a syncopated rhythm. In the

\[\text{έχθραν τις αὐτῆς καλλινίκον ἄσεται}\]
\[---u-|---u-|u---u---|\]

The ninth element must scan short by position and because it is part of a polysyllabic word (καλλινίκον).

\[\text{44 This initial syllaba anceps has an important exception: Porson’s Law (or Porson’s Bridge), which states that the syllaba anceps of the third metron cannot be long if it falls at the end of a word (with the exception of monosyllabic words). An example of this rule is found in the prologue-monologue of the Medea:} \]

\[\text{έχθραν τις αὐτῆς καλλινίκον ἄσεται}\]
\[---u-|---u-|u---u---|\]

The ninth element must scan short by position and because it is part of a polysyllabic word (καλλινίκον).
Medea’s first choral ode, the first strophe and antistrophe are purely dactylo-epitritic, but the second strophe and antistrophe are aeolic in nature, which introduce a wild range of meters, such as the aristophanean, the telesillean, glyconic, and pherecratean. Because of their complex scansion and the specialized jargon used to discuss them, I have provided a full breakdown of these choral rhythms and the first stasimon’s complete metrical scheme in the Appendix. Let us, then, move on to Annenskii’s handling of these passages and examine them closely.

The Prologue

Euripides’ prologue to the Medea is our first consideration. The Greek original appears below, followed by a literal English translation. Annenskii’s prologue to the play with a literal English translation of his work follows the Greek-English. We will repeat this pattern for the messenger rhesis and the chorus. The prologue-monologue in the Medea runs from lines 1-48:

ΤΡ. Εἴθ’ ὀφελ’ Ἀργοῦς μὴ διαπτάσθαι σκάφος
Κόλχων ἓς αἰαν κυνέας Συμπληγάδας,
μηδ’ ἐν νάπαις Πιλίου πεσεῖν ποτὲ
τμῆθαί σα πεύκη, μηδ’ ἐρεμώσαι χέρας
ἀνδρόν ἀριστέων, οἱ τὸ πάγχρυσον δέρος
Πελία μετήλθον: οὐ γὰρ ἄν δέσποιν’ εἰμή
Μήδεια πύργους γῆς ἔλευσ’ Ἰαλκίας,
ζητοῦμεν ἐκλαγεῖσ’ Ἰάσωνος,
οὐδ’ ἄν, κτανεῖν πείσασα Πελιάδας κόρας
πατέρα, κατώκει τήνδε γῆν Κορινθιαν
ζῆν ἀνδρὶ καὶ τέκνοισιν, ἀνάδανοσα μὲν
φυγῇ πολιτῶν ὀν ἄριστο χόνα
αὐτὴ τε πάντα συμφέροντο’ Ἰάσων;
ἡπερ’ μεγίστη γίγνεται σωτηρία,
ὅταν γυνὴ πρὸς ἄνδρα μὲ διηστάτη,
νὸν δ’ ἐχθρὰ πάντα, καὶ νοσεῖ τὰ φίλτατα.
προδοὺς γὰρ αὐτοῦ τενκα δεσπότιν ἀ’ ἐμὴν
γάμοις Ἰάσων βασιλικὸς εὐνάζεται,
γῆμας Κρέοντος παιδ', ὡς αἰσυνᾷ χθονός.
Μήδεια δ' ἡ δύστηνος ἕτιμασμένη
βοᾷ μὲν ὄρκους, ἀνακαλεῖ δὲ δεξιάς
πίστιν μεγίστην, καὶ θεοὺς μαρτύρεται
οίας ἁμοιβής ἐξ Ἴασονος κυρεῖ.
κεῖται δ' ἄστος, σῶμ' ύφει' ἀλγηδόσι,
τὸν πάντα συντήκουσα δακρούοις χρόνον,
ἐπεὶ πρὸς ἄνδρος ἠθεῖ' ἐδικημένη,
οὔτ' ὄμη' ἐπαίρουσ' ὦτ' ἄπαλλασσουσα γῆς
πρόσωπον· ὡς δὲ πέτρος ἢ θαλάσσιος
κλίδον, ἀκούει νοοθετουμένη φιλον,
agnosta Kρέντος παιδ', ὡς αἰσυνᾷ χθονός.
Mηδεία δ' ἡ δύστηνος ἕτιμασμένη
βοᾷ μὲν ὄρκους, ἀνακαλεῖ δὲ δεξιάς
πίστιν μεγίστην, καὶ θεοὺς μαρτύρεται
οίας ἁμοιβής ἐξ Ἴασονος κυρεῖ.
κεῖται δ' ἄστος, σῶμ' ύφει' ἀλγηδόσι,
τὸν πάντα συντήκουσα δακρούοις χρόνον,
ἐπεὶ πρὸς ἄνδρος ἠθεῖ' ἐδικημένη,
οὔτ' ὄμη' ἐπαίρουσ' ὦτ' ἄπαλλασσουσα γῆς
πρόσωπον· ὡς δὲ πέτρος ἢ θαλάσσιος
κλίδον, ἀκούει νοοθετουμένη φιλον,
sweet love sickens/grows ill. For, betraying his children and my mistress, Jason weds a kingly nuptial, having married the child of Creon, who rules this land. But Medea, wretched, dishonored woman, swears oaths and calls out a great pledge by her right hand. She calls upon the gods to witness what recompense from Jason she got. She lies about, fasting, resigning her body to grief, wasting away all this time in tears, ever since she perceived her outrage at the hands of her husband, neither having lifted her eyes, nor having turned her face from the earth. Having been advised, she listens to her friends just as a stone or sea wave, save when, having turned her milky-white neck, all to her self she bewails her dear father and her land and her home, from where she came with her husband, who now holds her dishonored. But this wretched woman has learned from misfortune how good a thing it is not to abandon one’s father land. But she loathes her children, nor is she gladdened in seeing (them). But I am anxious (δέδοικα) that she plots something new; her heart is grievous/heavy, and she will not endure suffering badly; I myself know this woman and I fear her, lest she thrust a sharpened knife/sword through the heart/liver, entering stealthily the house where the marriage-bed has been made, or even that she might catch some greater misfortune. For she is terrible/dangerous; in truth, anyone taking up battle against her will not bear the prize easily. But, goodness, the children, having finished their sport, draw near, having reflected not at all on their mother’s woes; for the young mind is not wont to grieve.

Действие происходит в Коринфе, перед домом Медеи. Обычная декорация трагедии. Правый проход изображает улицу, ведущую к дворцам Креонта и Ясона, левый ведет в гавань и за границу.

Кормилица

О, для чего крылатую ладью
Лазурные, сшибался, утесы
В Колхиду пропускали, ель зачем
Та падала на Пелий, что вельможам,
Их веслами вооружив, дала
В высокий Иолк в злаченых завитках
Руно царю Фессалии доставить?
К его стенам тогда бы и моя
Владычица не приплыла, Медея,

Девятый акт:

155
Ясона полюбив безумно, - там
Убить отца она не научала б
Рожденных им и нежных Пелиад,
И не пришлось бы ей теперь в Коринфе
Убежища искать с детьми и мужем.

Пусть гражданам успела угодить
Она в изгнании, и мужу оставалась
Покорною женой... (а разве есть
На свете что милей семьи, где с мужем
Живет жена согласно?), но удел
Медеи стал иной. Ее не любят,
И нежные глубоко страждут узы.
Детей Ясон и с матерью в обмен
На новое отдать решился ложе,
Он на царевне женится - увы!

Оскорблена Медея, и своих
Остановить она не хочет воплей.
Она кричит о клятвах и руки
Попранную зовут обратно верность,
Богов зовет в свидетели она
Ясновой расплаты. И на ложе,
От пищи отказавшись, ночь и день
Отдавши мукам тело, сердцу тяять
В слезах дает царица с той поры,
Как злая весть обиды поселилась
В ее душе. Не поднимая глаз
Лица, к земле склоненного, Медея,
Как волн утес, не слушает друзей,
В себя прийти не хочет. Лишь порою,
Откинув шею белую, она
Опомнится как будто, со слезами
Мешая имя отчее и дома
Родного, и земли воспоминанье,
И все, чему безумно предпочла
Она ее униженного мужа.

Несчастье открыло цену ей
Утраченной отчизны. Дети даже
Ей стали ненавистны, и на них
Глядеть не может мать. Мне страшно, как бы
Шальная мысль какая не пришла
Ей в голову. Обид не переносит
Тяжелый ум, и такова Медея.
И острого мерещится удар
Невольно мне меча, разящий печень,
Там над открытым ложем, - и боюсь,
Чтобы, царя и молодого мужа
Железом поразивши, не пришлось
Ей новых мук отведать горше этих.
Да, грозен гнев Медеи: не легко
Ее врагу достанется победа.

Но мальчиков я вижу - бег они
Окончили привычный и домой
Идут теперь спокойно. А до муки
И дела нет им материнской. Да,
Страдания детей не занимают.

Справа старый дядька ведет двух мальчиков. Кормилица,
dядька и дети.

The action opens in Corinth, before the house of Medea.
Typical décor of tragedy. The right passage represents the
street leading to the courtyard of Creon and Jason, the left
leads to the harbor and off to the city limits

Wet Nurse:

O, for what did the azure, clashing cliffs permit the winged
boat into Colchis, why did that spruce fall in Pelion, what
allowed these noblemen, having armed themselves with
oars, to reach lofty Iolchis on the lush waves/curls to obtain
the fleece for the king of Thessaly? Then my mistress,
Medea, out of her mind in love with Jason, would not have
sailed to its walls,—there she would not have instructed
them of tender births to kill their father, Pelias, and it would
not have come to her now to seek refuge in Corinth with
her children and husband. Granted that she benefited her
citizens when she ended up in exile, she remained a
submissive wife to her husband (after all, in this world, is
there anything dearer than a family where the wife lives in
accordance with her husband?), but the fate of Medea
became another [it changed]. She is not loved, and the
tender bonds suffer profoundly. Jason decided to give
away his children and their mother in exchange for a new
bed; he is marrying the princess—alas! Medea, scorned,
does not want to cease her howls. She shrieks oaths and by
her hands calls back her trampled fidelity, she calls the
gods as witnesses to Jason’s retributions. And giving her
body over to torment, day and night, on her bed, by
refusing food, my queen has resigned to melt her heart in
her tears, ever since the evil news of the offenses against
her took up residence in her soul. Medea, not raising the
eyes of her bending face from the earth, as a cliff [does not
listen] to waves, she does not listen to her friends, she does not wish to come to her senses. Only now and then, folding back her white neck, she comes to her senses as if, invoking with her tears her father’s name and her birth-home, and the memory of her land, and everything, to which she insanely preferred the husband who is humiliating her. Misfortune revealed the price of her lost fatherland to her. Even the children have become hateful to her, and, as their mother, she is not able to look upon them. I am terrified that a mad thought might enter into her head. A heavy mind does not endure offenses, and such is Medea [Medea is of such a mind]. And the thrust of a sharp sword unwillingly appears to me, dashing at the liver, there over the open bed,—and I am afraid that, having smote the king and young husband with iron, it might not come to her to taste of new, bitterer torments. Ah yes, the rage of Medea is menacing: victory does not come easily to her enemy. But I see the boys—they have finished their customary race, and now they come softly into the house. But they don’t think about their mother’s torment and her affairs. Indeed, sufferings do not concern children.

_The old tutor enters with the two boys._

One of the first things to strike the reader of tragedy in the original Greek is the absence of stage direction. In Greek tragedy, entrances and exits are indicated through the language used by the characters, such as references, often through deictic elements, to arrivals or toward destinations of those leaving the stage. Due to modern convention, this is one the easiest places for translators to insert themselves into their translations. We notice here, in his prologue-monologue, that Annenskii enjoys adding extensive description and stage direction. This practice paints a more vivid picture for the modern reader, and it is common in English. Consider, for example, John Davie’s 1996 translation of _The Children of Heracles_. Before Iolaus’ prologue-monologue, we read Davie’s detailed description of the set, the characters, and even the atmosphere of the opening scene: “_The scene is the altar of the god Zeus at Marathon. Seated on the steps_
are the young sons of the hero Heracles, now dead, and their protector, IOLAUS, nephew of the hero and himself now an old man” (93); or even Rex Warner’s simple direction in his Medea: “SCENE: In front of Medea’s house in Corinth. Enter from the house Medea’s nurse” (59); back to Davie, we see a similarity in information but difference, perhaps, in ethos in his Medea: “The scene is set before the house of JASON in Corinth” (49). Whose house it is may not appear to matter too much, but there is, perhaps, a judgment with respect to agency and power even in the stage direction (see previous chapter). We see a much heavier hand in this regard with Annenskii, who describes not only the mise en scène, but the city of the action and where the exodoi lead. Most significantly, though, with respect to my argument that Annenskii crafts a feminist translation that empowers Medea, it is her house. But this is a superficial concern. The images, the language, and other translation choices deserve the lion’s share of our attention.

More than diction, more than “Russified” images, more than anything else, the most salient feature of any translation is its form. Innokentii Annenskii has rendered Euripides into verse. Annenskii’s Medea is an unrhymed, iambic pentameter (we will discuss the meter of Annenskii’s translation of the chorus below). Choosing iambics is obvious enough, as Greek tragedy is also an iambic verse (except for the choral odes, as we have seen). Reducing the feet from the Greek trimeter (three feet of two iambics each) to the Russian pentameter (five feet of one iamb each) might make for some interesting notes, but what the key to our metrical analysis rests in the difference between the systems of prosody in Russian and Greek. Greek meter is quantitative, while Annenskii’s versification is syllabotonic, making for a convenient system for classical translation. It is the syllabotonic system that permits Annenskii to create his varied iambic line, which
plays well into Euripides’ meter. We have just discussed the Greek iambic metron, and I refer the reader to the appendix for a fuller explication. Because of the possibility of the trochaic (iambic) line in Euripides, the Greek trimeter allows for great variety and great play in the weight of the line. As we discussed above, 54.1% of the prologue-monologue is of balanced (4 shorts) to very heavy (2 shorts) weight. One of the benefits of translating Greek into Russian is the room for play in the weight of a line. Annenskii’s iambic pentameter version of the Greek makes good use of this freedom; but he prefers a fidelity to Euripides’ weight, as we will see.

Innokentii Annenskii’s system of versification produces the following scheme:

\[ u \times | u \times | u \times | u \times | u \times | u \times | (x) \]

The Russian’s prosody thus follows a similar, but inverse freedom. Annenskii’s line cannot hold more than five stressed syllables, but it can be largely unstressed, especially given the nature of Russian words: a happily polysyllabic language, Russian generally permits only one stress per word. Thus, in his translation of the prologue-monologue, Annenskii produces the following line:

Их веслами вооружив, дала

\[ u / | u u | u u | u / | u / | \]

What results, here, is a largely unstressed line, but a line with a masculine (stressed) ending. Thus, while the anapestic nature of this line provides a degree of lightness, it is the masculine clausula that gives the line its pop, particularly since the next syllable (the first element of the coming anacrusis), must be short. Annenskii seemed well aware of the overall weight of Euripides’ prologue-monologue, and using the masculine/feminine

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45 The final unstressed syllable “(x)” represents the possibility of the feminine line in Russian; this clausula is utilized in Annenskii, but not for rhyming purposes, as is common in the Russian pentameter.
clausulae, he offers an almost equivalent overall weight to the speech. Recall that Euripides’ first 48 lines have only 22 light lines; in Annenskii’s 64 lines, 54.7%, are feminine, while only 29 lines are masculine. Annenskii, in this way, adapts the restraints of his target language into a freedom that mimics the weight of his source.

Of meter, though, we must make one more remark. Any translation of Greek tragedy faces a conundrum: concerning the meter of tragedy, Aristotle notes that “once dialogue had come in, Nature herself discovered the appropriate measure. For the iambic is, of all measures, the most colloquial: we see it in the fact that conversational speech runs into iambic lines more frequently than into any other kind of verse” (IV.14); but, the philosopher also aligns tragedy with the greatness of epic: “the lampooners became writers of Comedy, and the Epic poets were succeeded by Tragedians, since the drama was a larger and higher form of art” (IV.10). How does the modern translator capture the rhythm of colloquial speech with the polish of “high art?” Annenskii’s language is more elevated than colloquial, but despite multiple archaisms and poeticisms (e.g., “vel’mozham” or the high-style instrumental –oiu form in “pokornoiu” and “poroiu”) he was, as shown above, a modernizer of Euripides. Annenskii thus preserved the loftiness of Euripides, but lost little of the tragedian’s modernism or innovation. We may now turn to the content of Annenskii’s translation, which is at once impressionistic and interpretive in its fidelity.

A close look at this prologue-monologue reveals Annenskii’s clear sympathy with Medea. This is not an insignificant point in the analysis of Annenskii’s translation, for the extent to which Euripides wants us to sympathize with Medea is not so clear. Hall suggests that Euripides “keeps Medea at an emotional distance from the audience by
opening her play with her anxious nurse” (xxxiii). Donald Mastronarde, discussing
Medea’s position as a barbarian, a sorceress, and a woman, explains that her foreigner
status, her otherness, creates a certain problem in the audience’s reaction to the heroine.
Mastronarde asks,

to what extent did Eur. want and expect his audience to understand and sympathize with Medea, despite her otherness, and to what extent did his portrayal (regardless of his intentions) reflect and reinforce his audience’s ideological assumptions about Greekness and maleness?...Attic tragedy deliberately chooses to portray persons and events at a distant remove from contemporary reality. The mythic past is, in some sense, a foreign country, to which contemporary categories are applicable only through a filter of difference. Kings and princely heroes like Jason and Creon represent to the audience ‘the other’ almost as much as Medea does. Moreover, the mythic past, as established by Homeric and Hesiodic poetry, is a world of permeable boundaries. The Greek gods beget children in other lands as well as in Greece, and heroic founders migrate from place to place...Although it is clear that the Greeks’ (and the Athenians’) sense of distinction from, and even superiority to, other peoples became much more pronounced after the Persian Wars, tragedy could look both ways, toward the epic model and toward contemporary assumptions and this ambivalence is one source of tension in Eur.’s play...Medea’s foreignness certainly is made thematic in the play. (23)

Beyond whatever sympathy one viewer/reader might have over another at various moments of the play, whether because of Medea’s acrasia, because of her outrage, or because of her actions, handing the prologue-monologue over to the Nurse keeps the

46 Some scholarly debate has gone on regarding Medea as a witch. Knox, for example, feels that this is to place an anachronistic judgment on Medea’s use of “pharmaka,” arguing that many women in ancient Greece dabbled in potions (“The Medea of Euripides” 1977); Mills has suggested that Euripides “goes out of his way to emphasize that their magical effect derives from Medea herself (Med. 789, 806, 1126, 1201)” (293, n.19); I would add to Mills’ argument that, even if many women in the ancient world were professional potion-mixers, few were so successful as Medea. I am not aware of any primary historical texts that describe people melting and rooms burning because of a potion mixed by the wife of Dikaiopolis. We see parallels in the myth of Deianeira and Heracles, but Deianeira was hardly your typical 5th century Athenian, nor did she herself mix the poison that destroys her husband.
audience at one remove from Medea. For, “the speaker is a minor character, one who will not be seen again after the prologue-scenes…: this technique distances the audience from quick emotional involvement with the protagonist(s), but arouses ominous anticipation” (Mastronarde, 160). By postponing the appearance of Medea, and by focusing attention on the Nurse’s laments, Euripides does not present a clear side until the very end of the play: Medea’s appearance _ex machina_ inverts the audience’s expectations of justice, of order, and of emotional denouement and catharsis. Aristotle certainly objected to Euripides’ use of the _deus ex machina_, especially in this play (Poetics, XV.7), but this dramatic conclusion leaves little question that Medea executes her actions with impunity. We can be at least somewhat clear on where Euripides stands on the Medea issue, but the playwright does not reveal his hand at the very start. His judgment of the situation (Medea’s and Jason’s falling out, the murder of the princess and king, particularly the infanticide) is not laid so bare until this startling conclusion, and while Euripides seems to exculpate Medea with the _mēchanē_, it is not without its terror:

This is one of the most alarming features of the play, the fact that there is no comparatively distant and objective divine figure to speak with the voice of authority, relating these events to real life through their link with some cult or institution and thereby restoring a sense of normality after the frightful extremes of the action. Medea makes a link between this story and a festival at Corinth…but she offers no relief whatever from the horror of the situation. (Easterling, 199)

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47 One could argue that some of the nurse’s language (e.g., the participle _πεισάσα “having persuaded”_ in line 9 is a very kind way of describing Medea’s role in the murder of Pelias) is somewhat pro-Medea, but it should be remembered that this is the nurse, or servant, of Medea. She cannot be blamed for her loyalty. And anyway, the nurse is aware of just who Medea is: “although the nurse gives a touching account of Medea’s reaction to Jason’s treatment (24-33), she is not herself deceived by this pathetic behavior, for her long experience of her mistress has taught her that she is an extraordinary woman (44) who cannot be expected to react as other women might react in these circumstances” (Bongie, 28-9).
What Euripides does for Medea in this final scene, beyond inventing it in the first place, is to remove Medea’s actions from the realm of mortal justice: “Medea in the role of deus ordains the commemorative ritual for her children, with the result that by the murderess’ own dispensation her guilt and sorrow for her crime are transferred onto the city” (Mills, 295). Boedeker concentrates more on Medea herself, arguing, “ultimately Euripides’ Medea expands to the point where she obliterates the other characters in her myth, fully transcending—and eradicating—her own once-limited identity as woman, wife, mother, mortal” (148). Compare this to the androgyny I argue for in the previous chapter. Thus, the appearance of the Nurse at the start of the play, and the focus on how Medea’s misfortunes affect this servant, only further the tragic shock that is the end of the play. 48 Medea evolves in a way unique to the tragedy.

As for Annenskii’s translation, although the nurse-maid sings the prologue, we immediately sense that Annenskii, more than Euripides, despite knowing full well how the play will end, wants his reader to see Medea as the scorned, abandoned woman; for the Russian, she is not simply a scheming, raging witch. Such a reading by Annenskii opposes some critics of Euripides’ play. Richmond Lattimore, for example, in his, The Poetry of Greek Tragedy, states that the Medea “is a potent play because of its arresting situation with which we start, its fine writing in detail, and its simply beating us over the head with horror and pity for Medea’s victims” (108-9). Annenskii, as well other scholars, though, find Medea’s victimization to trump that of Jason or the princess or Creon. To this end,

Euripides needs to make us believe in Medea’s maternal feeling not because we are to think there is a real hope that

48 For more on the “game” that Euripides plays with his audience leading up the deus ex machina scene, see Collinge, N. E. “Medea ex Machina.” Classical Philology, 57:3 (Jul., 1962), 170-172.
For Easterling, Euripides’ goads us to sympathy through his rhetoric. Indeed, D. J. Conacher recognizes that “Euripides is admittedly the most ‘rhetorical’ of the Greek tragic poets and yet also the one providing the most clearly-marked tragic themes and the subtlest psychological effect (in individual scenes if not in overall characterization)” (82). Similarly, Annenskii’s sympathy with Medea, though earlier on than Euripides’, is borne out at the grammatical level, as well as in Annenskii’s vocabulary.

The Russian opens with a series of questions, each leading up to the current situation that Medea, the nurse’s queen, has come to Corinth and now finds her fate to have taken a turn for the worse. The Greek does not place such emphasis on Medea qua victim. On the contrary, the Greek begins with the interjection εἴθε…µὴ (“would that not”), paving the way for a set of negative wishes that, unlike Annenskii’s version, victimize the nurse, not Medea. Indeed, Euripides chooses to retain his Medea’s status until later in the play. Euripides is not beyond a character appealing to the audience in the prologue-monologue, though often these are gods who do not so much need the audience’s sympathy as their reverence, and, here, the fears of the Nurse occupy too much space for the audience to think about Medea alone. The Nurse involves the whole mythology of the Argonauts, the daughters of Pelias, and the children themselves. Annenskii cannot break too far from this, for he is translating Euripides, but he does shift the reader’s sympathy from a vague space, where all involved have had it pretty rough, to Medea. The effect of this difference is clear. This is not to suggest that Euripides does
not allow for any sympathy for his heroine, but he is careful about how invested his audience can become. Euripides accomplishes this with his masterful command of language. At the closing of the prologue-monologue, the nurse announces the entrance of the children:

The children, we are told in the announcement, arrive mētrōs oudēn ennoùmenoi/kakôn (‘with no thought of their mother’s woes’, 47-8). The phrase mētrōs.../kakôn can refer to both Medea’s woes (an objective genitive, and this the more obvious meaning) and to the woes that lie in store for the children from Medea (a subjective genitive). Euripides thus breaks the convention to underscore the importance of the children and Medea’s potential for violence, and he highlights his point with a play on words. (Halleran, 7)

This would be easy enough to miss, particularly for his audience who do not have the luxury of a rewind button. The text, however, contains this word play, and even if we can tease out a certain sympathy for Medea, we cannot divorce this sympathy from her children’s coming fate.

Readers of Annenskii cannot help but feel badly for Medea from the tragedy’s beginning, whereas in Euripides the audience is left to use circumstantial evidence to decide for themselves where they stand vis à vis Medea and her actions. We must hear about Medea’s situation second-hand, and in language that subtly focuses on the nurse. The various perspectives introduced so early in the play postpone the reader’s sympathy, whereas Annenskii makes choices to bring the reader into Medea’s corner straightaway.

Annenskii is more ideological in his philosophical outlook than Euripides. Euripides explores gender politics in his play and in 5th century Athens; Annenskii, though, wants to lay bare the inequalities of society, the struggle women face in the patriarchy, and for him Medea, for all her exaggerated qualities, represents the archetype
of this struggle. That is, Euripides crafts a great proto-feminist character; in translating her, Annenskii analyses her, interprets her, and shows her true impact. Annenskii not only peels back for us the consequence of Medea as a character and a type, but he also sympathizes with her position. He wants his reader to have compassion for her, too, because his effort to rehabilitate her means something to him personally.

Two passages in Annenskii’s prologue-monologue are particularly instructive of the Russian’s unhesitating compassion for Medea. At lines 14-15, Euripides explains the necessary actions for a wife to increase her security and her faithfulness. Having described Medea’s flight from Iolchis, and how this gladdened the people there, he explains that she has yielded to Jason in all matters, a good and praiseworthy course of action:

ἥπερ μεγίστη γίγνεται σωτηρία,
ὅταν γυνὴ πρὸς ἄνδρα μὴ διχοστατῇ.

which becomes the greatest source of security whenever a woman does not cross her husband.

In a move that removes concerns for security, Annenskii (17-19):

...(а разве есть
На свете что милей семьи, где с мужем
Живет жена согласно?)

(after all, in this world, is there anything dearer than a family where the wife lives in accordance with her husband?)

Euripides implies that, although Medea began her time with Jason as an obedient wife, she has grown undesirable to Jason. In contrast, Annenskii portrays a woman who was not so much concerned with security, and, if a woman ever needed security, it was Medea out of Iolchis, as with wishing to molt from her troubled past to create a “milaia sem’ia”
(a “kindly family”). We find further support for this shift in sympathy in the following line. Euripides, following his gnomic statement on spousal relations, says, “νῦν δ’ ἐχθρὰ πάντα καὶ νοσεῖ τὰ φίλτατα” (“but now everything is enmity; their sweet love grows ill”).

Compare to Annenskii’s translation: “no udel/Medei stal inoi. Ee ne liubiat,/I nezhnye gluboko strazhdut uzy” (“but the fate of Medea became another. She is not loved, and the tender bonds suffer profoundly”). The love, which in Euripides grew ill and became hostility, has, in Annenskii, become a change of fortune for Medea (and apparently for her only), and her popularity has left. Annenskii, thus, does not allow his reader to wait for an unfolding of events to make judgement. Within the first sixteen lines, we are in Medea’s corner.

The other passage from the prologue-monologue to consider in this regard is from lines 34-35:

ἔγνωκε δ’ ἡ τάλαινα συμφορᾶς ὡπο
οἷον πατρῴας μάπολείπεσθαι χθονός

But his wretched woman has learned from misfortune how good a thing it is not to abandon one’s fatherland.

Euripides, here, is coolly objective in this statement, mincing no words over the fact that Medea abandoned her family and must now pay the price. Annenskii is, predictably, far more subjective, and removes Medea from blame entirely, blaming her fate instead (45-46):

Несчастье открыло цену ей
Утраченной отчизны.

Misfortune revealed the price of her lost fatherland to her
Perhaps, as Annenskii explained, Euripides sees that he cannot give us the whole tragedy all at once, and this is part of “preserving the correct measure in the doses of suffering which [the poet] forces us to experience,” discussed above. But why, then, does Annenskii change the prologue to pit Medea as the victim? What is gained from asking questions instead of shouting negative wishes? It is thus clear that what Annenskii is doing here is reading Euripides between the lines and translating what he finds, rather than worrying about “lexical precision” (leksicheskaia tochnost’).

What Annenskii reads is remarkably ahead of his time. Annenskii translates at a time when conservative, patriarchal ideology dominated (an état des choses our society still faces). He demonstrates this in his rendering of the lines concerning a wife’s duty to her husband (17-19). Recent scholarship makes clear what made Medea so difficult for the Greeks (and subsequent generations). She is imbued with negative qualities (to the Greek) and her marginalization is thus undeniable:

Many such “barbarian” attributes are reflected in Medea: unrestrained emotion (especially extreme displays of grief and anger); lust, sensuality, and transgression of normative Greek gender roles; bestiality; wealth, especially gold (a motif of this play, starting with the Golden Fleece); luxurious clothing (like Medea’s gifts to the princess); brutal violence and lawlessness; untrustworthiness, duplicity, and expertise with magic drugs…Many of these attributes are characteristic weapons of the powerless. Not coincidentally, many of the same stereotypes were attached to (Greek) women, since the barbarian and female were the primary categories of Other through which the adult Greek male defined himself…So a barbarian woman like Medea was doubly damned. The only way she could sink any lower on the ideological scale would be as an old slave-woman, like her own nurse. In addition, she violates in the most drastic way the positive ideals and desirable stereotypes of Greek womanhood—sexual restraint, deference first to one’s father and then to one’s husband, and devotion to one’s children. (Blondell 153-54)
Medea is a victim (of course, as shown in the previous chapter, she is a victim with teeth), and although she transcends the limitations Greek society tried to place on her, the true impact of her fate (as barbarian, as woman) seems only fully understandable from a late-20th or -21st century perspective, if we can understand it even now. Marianne McDonald, in her article “Medea as Politician and Diva: Riding the Dragon into the Future,” explains:

Medea’s anger turns to violent action, which can make her into a symbol of freedom, and emblem for the colonized turning the tables on the colonizer. Euripides, more than all other tragedians, has predicted many of the horrors that occur in the modern world, showing both the glory and the monstrosity of the oppressed turned oppressor. (304)

And so Annenskii’s understanding of the text and Medea herself affects his translation.

What is so noteworthy here is that the socio-political references in McDonald’s claim are distinctively mid- and late-20th century, long after Annenskii takes up Euripides. Annenskii reads something in Medea, in Euripides, that other scholars won’t identify for another sixty years.

Again, Euripides’ task is to create a textured, interesting character whose motivations, desires, and actions try to say something about the human experience. He seems to have hit upon something especially enlightening about that experience for the subaltern. Annenskii, for his part, is not writing the character. Annenskii reads Euripides, and thus he translates the character he sees and wants us to see: a character trapped beneath the boot of a misogynistic and rigidly hierarchical society. But she is a character who sees an out and who finds agency. Annenskii’s translation celebrates this fact.
One should not balk at the concept that translation is an act of reading, and as we know, Annenskii is an impressionistic critic/reader of the first rank. He will find such subjective reading useful in his translation. In our post-Barthesian world, translation could be considered an act of textual creation. Roland Barthes provides us with the necessary economy to see Annenskii’s translation as a new text with a slightly new pathos:

We know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of an Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writing, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture….the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. (122)

This assertion, that literary creation is necessarily and probably unconsciously, a reinterpretation and/or expansion of already created texts (be they oral, written, or otherwise), can help us with both Euripides’ and Annenskii’s prologue-monologue.

Euripides, as discussed above, hides Medea from his audience for nearly one hundred lines, whereupon she appears with few words beyond her cries:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{iώ,} \\
\text{δύστανος \ έγώ \ μελέα τε \ πόνον,} \\
\text{iώ \ μοί \ μοι, \ πος \ άν \ όλοίμαν;} \\
\text{Oh,} \\
\text{I am wretched, unhappy from toils,} \\
\text{Oh, woe is me, I wish so to perish}
\end{align*}
\]

The Athenian audience, at this point in the tragedy, is none the wiser to what Euripides has in store for them, for nowhere is Barthes’ idea of unoriginality (to an extent) truer than in ancient literature, most of which is based upon its oral antecedents. Euripides, however, is unique in this sense. Karl Reinhardt explains that,
the way in which Euripides builds a bridge between local legend and his own domain, the psychological-pathological, was to be of even greater significance for world literature. It was his discovery that local legend and local cult can, beyond their religious content, be psychologically-poetically interesting, dramatically fascinating. (32)\(^49\)

Reinhardt both implies Barthes’ assertion, and he opens the door for us to discuss how tragedy is itself an act of translation. With only one extant tragedy based on an historical event (Aeschylus’ the *Persians*), all tragedy uses myth (Euripides was especially fond of Steisichorus) as a launching pad for its plots, themes, and characters. Indeed, the scholarship shows that “Euripides constantly employs themes and motifs drawn from traditional myths to enrich and illuminate, give shape to or to comment ironically upon, the events of his plays” (Mills 289). Thus, when Euripides decides to write his *Medea*, there is a finite number of versions with which his audience can be familiar. Working in and against such traditions, then, much the way Shakespeare, for example, reworks Ovid, or the way Pushkin rewrites the Lucrece or Don Juan story, Euripides has room to play with the Medea myth. If he had chosen to do so, Euripides could have explored the familiar psychologies of the characters, or, as he did choose to do, he could rewrite the Medea myth’s grisly outcome. One version of the myth depicts Medea setting fire to the palace, in which Jason, along with Glaucce and Creon, burns up. What our tragedian does, though, is thoroughly unexpected: as Mills explains, “Medea will complete her revenge by killing Jason’s (and her own) children, and so destroy him [Jason] spiritually rather than physically” (290). This does not necessarily undo Barthes’ contention that all texts are mere tissues of quotations. S. P. Mills argues that Euripides’ Medea myth results

\(^{49}\) It is worth highlighting that Euripides was fond of drawing on local, not pan-hellenic, and thus more recondite sources, and it should be noted, too, that the first personal library in western civilization belonged to our fair Euripides (Casson).
from the weaving together of two other stories, the Ino/Procne myth, following
Fontenrose, in which a child is murdered for revenge (and murdered justifiably, it seems),
and the *conte* analyzed by Krappe, of the demon-mistress, who sends a magical gift to
kill off the rival who roadblocks access to her lover. Thus, Euripides is fresh in his
Medea version, but late with the infanticide. This is not to detract from the innovation to
the myth at hand. Penning a Medea who not only contemplates but who also actually
does kill her children, creates an entirely new psychology for the characters and opens
wholly new questions about justice, revenge, and theodicy.

For Annenskii, his carrying over of Euripides is much like Euripides’ translation
of various myths and legends. Annenskii sees the psychological possibilities in
Euripides’ tragedy and, owing no doubt to his method of reading (see above), Annenskii
makes some shifts to accommodate his sympathy for Medea, to explore her position and
actions as a victim of Jason and Greece, and, perhaps, to engage in the same rewriting of
the Jason and Medea myth that Euripides himself does (or that Medea *herself* does, on
which more below). We have already touched on Annenskii’s tendency toward
subjective literary criticism, but this tendency permeated his translations, too, and he
admits as much in the first stanza of his poem, “Drugomu” (“To Another”):

Я полюбил безумный твой порыв,
Но быть тобой и мной нельзя же сразу,
И, веющих снов иероглиф раскрыв,
Узорную пишу я четко фразу. (1981, 103)

I fell in love with your crazy impulse,
But you and I cannot exist at once,
And, having deciphered the hieroglyphs of prophetic dreams,
I write your decorated phrase clearly.
This will remind the reader of Goethe’s “third epoch” of translation, in which “the goal of the translation is to achieve perfect identity with the original, so that the one does not exists instead of the other, but in the other’s place” (61). Perhaps Annenskii identifies too closely with Medea and not enough with Euripides, but his love of the tragedian is well documented. It would seem, then, that Annenskii saw in the Medea a dominant that he chose to carry over first and foremost: Medea herself. And such a translational choice makes sense for a man who wanted to show Russians the playwright he loves, and for a man who wanted to evoke sympathy for a character who had been victimized by attitudes that prevailed down to his own (down to our own!) time.

**The Messenger Speech**

The next passage from Euripides’ Medea for us to consider is the messenger speech that describes the violent demise of Medea’s rivals (1136-1230):

ΙΔΠΕΙ ΤΕΚΝΩΝ ΣΩΝ ἩΛΒΕ ΔΙΤΤΥΧΟΣ ΓΟΝΗ
ΣΩΝ ΠΑΤΡΙ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΡΗΛΒΕ ΝΥΜΦΙΚΟΥΣ ΔΟΜΙΟΥΣ,
ΗΘΜΕΝ ΟΥΠΕΡ ΣΟΙΣ ΕΚΑΜΝΟΜΕΝ ΚΑΚΟΙΣ
ΔΜΕΣ· ΔΙ’ ὈΤΩΝ Δ’ ΕΥΘΥΣ ἩΝ ΠΟΛΥΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ
ΣΕ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΣΙΝ ΣΟΝ ΝΕΙΚΟΣ ἘΣΠΕΙΣΘΑΙ ΤΟ ΠΡΙΝ.
ΚΥΝΕΙ Δ’ Ὅ ΜΕΝ ΤΙΣ ΧΕΙΡ, Ὅ ΔΕ ΞΑΝΟΝ ΚΑΡΑ
ΠΑΙΔΩΝ· ἘΓΩ ΔΕ ΚΑΙΤΩΣ ΗΔΟΝΗΣ ὩΠΟ
ΣΤΕΓΑΣ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΩΝ ΣΩΝ ΤΕΚΝΟΙΣ ἈΥʼ ἙΣΠΟΜΗΝ.
ΔΕΣΠΟΙΝΑ Δ’ ἩΝ ΑΝΤΙ ΣΟῦ ΘΑΥΜΑΖΟΜΕΝ,
ΠΡΙΝ ΜΕΝ ΤΕΚΝΩΝ ΣΩΝ ΕΙΣΗΔΕΙΝ ΕΥΝΟΡΙΔΑ,
ΠΡΟΘΥΜΟΝ ΕΙΧʼ ὈΦΘΑΛΜΟΝ ΕΙΣ ἸΑΣΟΝΑ·
ἘΞΕΙΤΑ ΜΕΝΤΟΙ ΠΡΟΥΚΑΛΥΨΑΤ’ ὈΜΙΑΤΑ
ΛΕΥΚΗΝ Τ’ ἈΠΕΣΤΡΕΨ’ ἘΜΠΑΙΝ ΠΑΡΗΜΑ,
ΠΑΙΔΩΝ ΜΥΣΑΡΧΕΙΑ’ ΕΙΣΟΔΟΥΣ· ΠΟΣΙΣ ΔΕ ΣΟῖς
1140

1145 ὌΡΓΑΣ Τ’ ἈΦΗΡΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΧΟΛΟΝ ΝΕΑΝΙΔΟΣ,
ΛΕΓΟΝ ΤΑΔ’· Οὐ ΜΗ ΔΥΣΜΕΝΗΣ ἘΣΗ ΦΙΛΟΙΣ,
ΠΑΥΣΗ ΔΕ ΘΥΜΟΥ κΑΙ ΠΑΙΛΙΝ ΣΤΡΕΨΕΙΣ ΚΑΡΑ,
ΦΙΛΟΥΣ ΝΟΜΙΣΟΥΣ’ ΟΥΣΠΕΡ ἈΝ ΠΟΣΙΣ ΣΕΘΕΝ,
ΔΕΞΙ ΔΕ ΔΩΡΑ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΡΑΙΤΗΣΗ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ
1150

ΦΥΓΑΣ ἈΡΕΪΝΑΙ ΠΑΙΣΙ ΤΟΙΣΟΙ’ ἘΜΗΝ ΧΑΡΙΝ;
ἐδοὺς ἐσέσάδε κόσμον, οὐκ ἤνέσχετο, ἀλλ’ ἤνεσ’ ἄνδρι πάντα, καὶ πρὶν ἐκ δόμον μακράν ἀπείναι πατέρα καὶ παῖδας σέθεν λαβὼσα πέπλους ποικίλους ἠμεσχετο, χρυσοῦν τε θέεσα στέφανον ἁμφὶ βοστρύχοις λαμπρῷ κατόπτρῳ σχηματίζεται κόμην, ἁγγείον εἰκώ προσγελώσα σώματος, κάπειτ’ ἀναστάς’ εκ θρόνον διέρχεται στέγας, ἁβρόν βαϊνουσα παλλύκῳ ποδί, δόροις ὑπερχαῖροσα, πολλά πολλάκις τένοντ’ ἐς ορθὸν ὅμασι σκοπουένη. τούτῳ δὲ μὲν τείνων ἦν θέαμ’ ἰδεῖν’ χροιάν γάρ ἄλλαξεν λεχρία πάλιν χορή τέμυσα πόλι καὶ μόλις φθάνει θρόνουσιν ἑμεσσοῦσα μὴ χαμά πεσεῖν. καὶ τις γεραιῷ προσπόλων, δόξασά ποι ἦ Πανὸς ὀργάς ἐς τινος θεῶν μολεῖν, ἁνωλόλυξε, πρὸν γ’ ὀρὰ διὰ στόμα χοροῦντα λευκόν ἄφρόν, ὅματόν τ’ ἀπο κόρας στρέφουσαν, αἰμά τ’ οὐκ ἐνόν χροῖ εἰτ’ ἀντιμολοῦν ἦκεν ὀλολυγής μέγαν κοκυτόν. εὐθὺς δ’ ἢ μὲν ἐς πατρος δόμους ὀρμησεν, ἢ δ’ ἀπὸ τὸν ἀπὸς πόσιν, φράσουσα νύμφης συμφορὰν’ ἀπωσα δὲ στέγη πυκνοῦσιν ἐκτυπεῖ δραμήσαν. ἥδη δ’ ἀνελθὼν κόλον ἐκπληθῶν δρόμου ταχὺς βαδιστῆς τερμῶν ἄν ἡπτετο· ἦ δ’ εξ ἀναώδου καὶ μύσαντος ὅματος δεινὸν σενάξασ’ ἠ τάλαιν’ ἱγείρετο. διπλῶν γὰρ αὐτῇ πήμ’ ἐπεστρατεύοσα· χρυσοὺς μὲν ἁμφὶ κρατὶ κείμενος πλάκος θεμαστὸν ἤι νάμα παφάγου πυρός, πέπλοι δὲ λεπτοὶ, σὺν τέκνον διορήματα, λευκὴν ἐδαπάτον σάρκα τῆς δυσδαίμονος, φεύγει δ’ ἀναστάς’ εἰκ τὸν τρόών πυρομένη, σείσουσα χαίτην κράτα τ’ ἄλλοτ’ ἄλλοσε, ρίψαι θέλουσα στέφανον· ἀλλ’ ἀραρότως σύνδεσα χρυσὸς εἶχε, πῦρ δ’ ἐπεί κόμην ἔσεισε, μάλλον δὲς τόσως ελάμπετο. πίτνει δ’ ἐς οὔδας συμφορῆ νικωμένη, πλὴν τῷ τεκόντι κάρτα δυσμαθῆς ἰδεῖν’ οὕτ’ ὅματόν γὰρ δῆλος ἦν κατάστασιν οὕτ’ εὐφυὲς πρόσωπον, αἰμα δ’ ἐξ ἄκρου ἔσταξε κρατὸς συμπεφυμένον πυρί, σάρκες δ’ ἀπ’ ὁστέων ὅστε πεύνικον ὀάκρα γνάθοις ἀδήλοις φαρμάκων ἄπέρρεον,
δεινὸν θέαμα. πᾶσι δ’ ἦν φόβος θιγείν νεκροῦ· τύχην γὰρ εἰχόμεν διδάσκολον. πατήρ δ’ ὁ τλήμων συμφορᾶς ἀγνωσία ἄριστον παρελθὼν δόμα προσπίνει νεκρῷ. 

ΜΕΣΣΕΝΓΕΡ: When the double offspring, your children, arrived with their father, and (when) they entered the bridal chamber, we slaves, who were distressed by your misfortunes, were gladdened; immediately in our ears was news (“common report”) that you and your lord/husband had made a truce to your earlier strife. So, one (of the servants) kisses the hands of the children, another kissed their golden haired heads; but I myself, on account of my joy, followed together with the children into the apartments/quarters of the women. The queen, whom we now revere (sarcastic) over you, before noticing the pair of your children, she held her zealous eyes on Jason; but then, (upon seeing them), she covered up her eyes and she turned her white cheek away, having felt disgust at the entrance of your children; but your husband was seeking to remove the anger and wrath of the young woman, saying the following...
things: “You are not to be hostile toward my loved ones; stay your anger and turn back your head, deeming as loved ones those whom your husband would so deem; and accept the gifts, and beg your father to release the banishment on these (here) children, for my sake.” And she, as soon as she saw the adornments, could not hold back, but she promised everything to her husband, and, before your children and their father left far from the house, having taken the brodered [also means “cunning”…how to bring out both?] robes, she put them on, placing the gold crown around her curls; she arranged her hair in a gleaming mirror, smiling at the lifeless image of her body. And then, having stood up from her seat/throne, she strode through the halls walking delicately on her snowy-white feet, completely giddy over the gifts, constantly checking out on tippy-toes the look (of her new clothes). After that, however, the spectacle was terrible to behold; for, her skin having changed color, falling, her limbs trembling, and she scarcely found the chair so as not to fall to the ground. And one of the older servant women, supposing perhaps that either the rites of Pan or some other of the gods had come upon her, raised the prayer-cry, until she saw white foam coming through the princess’ mouth, and saw her (the princess) twisting the pupils out from her eyes, and that her blood was not in her complexion. Then she (the old servant) sent forth a huge wail as the horrid successor of her ululation. Immediately, one of the servant women rushed to the father’s house, another rushed to the new groom, explaining the destruction of his bride. The whole house was echoing with much running about. At this point, a swift runner going up along the six-plethron leg of the race-course would be reaching the goal. And having groaned terribly, the miserable woman gathered herself out of her silence and from her closed eyes. A two-fold sorrow was advancing upon her. The gold garland placed on her head sent forth a wondrous stream of all-devouring fire, and the delicate robes, gifts from your children, devoured the flesh of this ill-fortuned woman. And having leapt up from her seat, she flees, ablaze, now shaking her hair, now her whole head, wishing to throw off the crown; but the gold fastenings were holding firmly, and the fire, when she shook her hair, blazed twice as much more than before. She fell to the floor, conquered by destruction, her head hard to recognize by looking except by her father; for neither the set form of her eyes were clear, nor was her facial expression natural, but blood, mixed with fire, was
dripping from the top of her head, and her flesh oozed away from the bones by means of the undetectable jaws of (your) poisons like dripping resin. It was a terrible sight. But everyone was frightened to touch the corpse, for we held what had happened as a lesson/teacher. But her wretched father, in his ignorance of her misfortune, suddenly burst into the room and collapsed onto the dead body. He cried out immediately, and having embraced her with his hands, he kissed her, saying the following things: “O miserable child, what god has so shamefully disrespectfully killed you? Who makes the old man, his one foot in the grave, bereft of you? Oh oh, would that I might die with you, child!” And when he ceased his threnodies and moans, desiring to remove his old body, it clung fast to the delicate robes, just as a shoot of ivy to the laurel tree, and there were terrible wrestlings; for he wanted to remove his knee, but she was stuck to him; whenever he would apply force, he would tear his old flesh from his bones. After a while he gave up, and the ill-fated man let go his breath; for he was no longer a master of the evil. The dead bodies lie there, both child and old father side by side, a misfortune longing for tears. Let your role in all this be left out of my story; for you yourself will know of the turning round of punishment. I think, and not for the first time now, that mortality is a shadow, nor would I hesitate to say that those among mortals who think they are wise, those very ones who are the anxious ponderers of words, incur for themselves the greatest penalty. You see (γάρ), no one of mortals is a happy man. Because wealth may flow in, one man might become more fortunate than another, but that is not happiness.

Вестник

1135 Когда твоих детей, Медея, складень Двустворчатый и их отец прошли К царевне в спальню, радость пробежала По всем сердцам - страдали за тебя Мы, верные рабы... А тут рассказы

1140 Пошли, что ссора кончилась у вас. Кто у детей целует руки, кто Их волосы целует золотые; На радостях я до покоеи женских Тогда проник, любуясь на детей.

1145 Там госпожа, которой мы дивиться Вместо тебя должны теперь, детей
Твоих сперва, должно быть, не видала;
Она Ясону только улыбнулась,
Но тотчас же фатой себе глаза 
И нежные ланиты закрывает;
Приход детей смутил ее, а муж
Ей говорит: "О, ты не будешь злою
С моими близкими, покинь свой гнев
И посмотрит на них; одни и те же 
У нас друзья, не правда ли? Дары
Приняв от них, ты у отца попросишь
Освободить их от изгнанья; я
Того хочу". Царевна же, увидев
В руках детей убор, без дальней слов
Все обещала мужу. А едва
Ясон детей увел, она расшитый
Набросила уж пелос и, волну
Волос златой прижавши диадемой,
Пред зеркалом блестящим начала 
Их оправлять, и тени красоты
Сияющей царевна улыбалась,
И, с кресла встав, потом она прошла
По комнате, и, белями ногами
Ступая так кокетливо, своим
Убором восхищалась, и не раз,
На цыпочки привстав, до самых пяток
Глазам она давала добрежать.
Но зрелище внезапно изменилось
В ужасную картину. И с ее
Ланит сбежала краска, видим...После
Царевна зашаталась, задрожали
У ней колени, и едва-едва...
Чтоб не упасть, могла дойти до кресла...
Тут старая рабыня, Пана ль гнев
Попритчился ей иль иного бога,
Не голосить... Но... ужас... вот меж губ
Царевниных комок явился пены,
Зрачки из глаз исчезли, а в лице
Не стало ни кровинки, - тут старуха
И причитать забыла, тут она
Со стоном зарыдала. Вмиг рабыни
Одна к отцу, другая к мужу с вестью
О бедствии - и тотчас весь чертог
И топтом наполнился, и криком...
И сколько на бегах возьмет атлет,
Чтоб, обогнув мету, вернуться к месту,
Когда прошло минут, то извяниве,
Слепое и немое, ожило:  
Она со стоном возвратилась к жизни

1195  
Болезненным. И два недуга враз  
На жалкую невесту ополчились:  
Венец на волосах ее златой  
Был пламенем охвачен жадным, риза ж,

1200  
Твоих детей подарок, тело ей  
Терзала белое, несчастной... Вижу: с места  
Вдруг сорвалась и - ужас! Вся в огне  
И силится стряхнуть она движеньем  
С волос венец, а он как бы прирос;

1205  
И только пуще пламя от попыток  
Ее растет и блещет. Наконец,  
Осиlena, она упала, мукой...  
Отец и тот ее бы не узнал:  
Ни места глаз, ни дивных очертаний

1210  
Не различить уж было, только кровь  
С волос ее катилась и кипела,  
Мешаясь с пламенем, а мясо от костей,  
Напоено отравою незримой,  
Сквозь кожу выступало - по коре

1215  
Еловой так сочатся слезы. Ужас  
Нас охватил, и не дерзали мы  
До мертвой прикоснуться. Мы угроze  
Судьбы вменили молча. - Ничего  
Не знал отец, когда входил, и сразу

1220  
Увидел труп. Рыдая, он упал  
На мертвую, и обнял, и целует  
Свое дитя и говорит: "О дочь  
Несчастная! Кто из богов позорной  
Твоей желал кончины и зачем

1225  
Осиритил он старую могилу,  
Взяв у отца цветок его? С тобой  
Пусть вместе бы убит я был". Он кончил  
И хочет встать, но тело, точно плуг,  
Которым лавр опутан, прирастает

1230  
К нетронутой одежде, - и борьба  
Тут началась ужасная: он хочет  
Поднятьсь на колени, а мертвцем  
Его к себе влечет. Усилия ж только  
У старца клочки мяса отдирают...

1235  
Попытки все слабее, гаснет царь  
И испускает дух, не властен больше  
Сопротивляться муке. Так они  
Там и лежат - старик и дочь, - бездушны  
И вместе, - слез желанная юдоль.
(Пауза.)

1240 А о тебе что я скажу? Сама
Познаешь ты весь ужас дерзновенья...
Да, наша жизнь лишь тень: не в первый раз
Я в этом убеждаюсь. Не боюсь
Добавить я еще, что, кто считает

1245 Иль мудрецом себя, или глубоко
Проникшим тайну жизни, заслужил
Название безумца. Счастлив смертный
Не может быть. Когда к нему плывет
Богатство - он удачник, но и только...

(Уходит в дверь налево.)

*i*Messenger*

Medea, when the double stock of your children and their father arrived at the princess’ bedroom, gladness ran through every heart—we, faithful slaves, felt for you…And right there, stories came that your falling out (with Jason) had been resolved. One (servant) kisses the hand of your children, another kisses their golden locks; in my joy, I then entered the women’s apartments, admiring the boys. There, the mistress, at whom we must now marvel in place of you, did not, probably, at first see your children. She only smiled at Jason, but at once she covered her tender cheeks and her eyes with her bridal veil; the arrival of the children troubled her, but your/her husband said to her: “Oh, you will not be nasty with my nearest and dearest, rid yourself of your anger and look upon them; we have the very same friends, don’t we? Accepting the gifts from them, you will ask your father to excuse them from exile; I want this.”

The princess, on her part (же), having laid eyes on the raiment in the hands of the children, without wasting words, agreed with her husband in all of this. S scarcely had Jason carried the children off (homeward), she put on the embroidered robe, and, having pinned the gold crown to a wave of her hair, she started to tidy it (her hair) in front of a shining mirror, and the princess smiled at the shimmering trace of her beauty, and, getting up from her chair, she then strolled about her room, and, stepping with her white legs so flirtatiously, she was enchanted by her raiment, and more than once, standing on tippy-toes, she did a “once
over” from head to toe. But the spectacle suddenly changed into a horrible scene. And the color drained from her cheeks, it seemed... After, the princess staggered backwards, her knees started to quiver, and just barely... in order not to fall, she was able to reach her chair... Then, an old slave-woman, mistaking this for the madness of Pan or some other god, started to wail... but... the horror... right then a lump of foam appeared between the princess’ lips, her pupils vanished from her eyes, not a droplet of blood remained in her face—first the old woman forgot even to wail, then she sobbed with a groan. In an instant, one of the slave-women ran (sc.) to the father, another to the husband, with news of the disaster,—and instantly the whole palace was filled with trampling and cries. And in the time that an athlete takes off in his races, so that, having rounded the mark, he might return to his starting block, when a minute had passed, that sculpture, blind and mute, reanimated: she came back to life with a painful groan. And two ailments simultaneously assailed the wretched bride. The gold crown, which embraced her hair, was engulfed in a greedy flame, and the riza, that gift of your children, tormented the white body of this unlucky girl... I saw it: suddenly she jumped up from her place, and—the horror! Everything was on fire, and she tries with a motion to shake the crown off her hair, but it was as if it had taken root; and from her attempts the conflagration only grows and shines more so. Finally, overcome with agony, she fell. Even her father would not have recognized her. It was not possible to distinguish either the placement of her eyes or the contours of her wonderful features (sc.), only blood, mixed with flame, streamed and seethed down from her hair, and flesh off the bones, having been filled with the invisible poison, appeared through her skin—in the way tears (i.e., sap) ooze through the spruce’s bark. The horror drew us in, and we did not dare to touch the dead body. We silently paid heed to the threat of her fate. The father knew nothing of all this when he entered, and at once he spotted the corpse. Sobbing, he fell on the dead body, and he hugs and kisses his child and says: “Oh, unfortunate daughter! Who of the gods wished your end with such disgrace, and why did he orphan this old grave, snatching from a father his flower? Would that I might die with you.” He finished and he wants to stand, but his body, as the ivy, by which the laurel is ensnared, became rooted to the untouched clothes,—and that’s when his horrible struggle began: he wants to rise up on his knees, but the corpse drags him down to itself. The
intense efforts only ripped the bubbling flesh from the old man…all his attempts get weaker, the king sinks and he lets out his breath, no longer capable of resisting the torture. And so they lay there—the old man and daughter—lifeless and side-by-side,—the desired valley of tears.

(Pause)

But what shall I say concerning you? You yourself will experience every horror of insolence…Yes, our life is but a shadow: it is not for the first time I am convinced of this. Neither am I afraid to add that he who considers himself either a sage or a profound interpreter of the secret of life, deserves the title of “fool.” A mortal cannot be happy. Even when riches flow to him—he is lucky, and only that…”

(Exit stage left)

Because we have already discussed at length Annenskii’s handling of the Euripidean meter, we will not revisit the topic except for a few specific cases. The scansion of Euripides’ messenger speech here is largely stable from one line to the next. For such a long passage, one might expect more variation in rhythm, but Euripides does not give this. In any case, there are more important matters vis à vis the messenger speech.

The scholarship shows that the Messenger-Rhesis in Greek tragedy is a vestige of epic poetry, such as Homer and Hesiod. Such speeches as this one in the Medea are particularly reminiscent of Homeric epic, with gruesome details and gore. But the link to epic is much more complex than its violent themes. Metrically, we are not in the world of epic poetry. Euripides’ messenger speech is still in the iambic trimeter of tragic poetry. Narratively and performatively, however, the Messenger-Rhesis feels epic. The messenger speech is a sustained narrative. In the case of our messenger-Rhesis from the Medea, the Homeric quality is clear: the messenger narrates for us the gruesome death of
Glauce and Creon. The nasty details remind us of the deaths of heroes on the Trojan 
plain, Achilles’ filling the Xanthos River with corpses, or perhaps Odysseus’ 
slaughtering of the suitors.

Scholars have debated the function of the messenger speech, with opinions 
ranging from functionalist (Heath, Bremmer) to the view that the angeloi are distinct, 
nuanced characters in their own right (Caverno). The messenger speech in Medea not 
only fulfills the functionalist concerns to tell a story of off-stage action, but it also has 
individual characteristics that paint the picture of a specific point of view. The speech 
certainly brings important dramatic action onto the stage and it flushes out central 
thematic elements for the play as a whole. It is significant for an audience to know what 
happens to Jason’s bride, Glauce, and to Creon, because the plot of the tragedy demands 
this. The details provided by the angelos in this speech, though, also illustrate the 
supposed savagery of Medea herself, which is important to the larger thematic concerns 
of the play, and its denouement in particular.

The following table will replace a full, line-by-line metrical breakdown of our 
Euripidean messenger speech. Keep in mind that Euripides is still in his iambic trimeter 
here, which is an interesting limitation of convention, particularly given scholars’ 
position that the messenger speech is a vestige of epic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight of Messenger-Rhesis in Euripides’ Medea (1136-1230)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Light Element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We discern certain patterns immediately, but to understand Euripides’ use of meter in the Messenger-\textit{Rhesis} more fully, it is advisable to provide a similar table for the prologue-monologue (the figures provided above were sufficient for their place, but a more detailed breakdown is now useful):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Light Element</th>
<th>2 Light Elements</th>
<th>3 Light Elements</th>
<th>4 Light Elements</th>
<th>5 Light Elements</th>
<th>6 Light Elements</th>
<th>7 Light Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More important than those lines that make up the majority of both the prologue-monologue and the Messenger-\textit{Rhesis} (that is, lines that contain between 4 and 5 light elements), are those especially heavy or especially light lines. The overall weight of the messenger speech is much lighter than the nurse’s opening \textit{rthesis}, and this is probably due to the messenger’s loyalty to Medea. He sarcastically describes the princess in line 1144, saying

\begin{quote}
δέσποινα δ’ ἴν νῦν ἀντί σοῦ θαυμάζομεν
\end{quote}

The queen, whom we now revere over you

Indeed, as Bongie observes, “the deed he describes with the familiar δεινόν (1121), but his sympathy is still with her [Medea] as he urges her to escape” (52-3).

The messenger-speech, though, is given particular lightness with its rare instance of resolution (recall that only about 75 resolutions occur in 1000 trimeters of the Medea):

\begin{quote}
eἰτ’ ἀντίμολπον ἤκεν ὀλολυγής μέγαν
\end{quote}

--- u --- | u --- u u u | u --- u --- |
The second foot of 1176 resolves in ὀλολυγῆς to reveal a quadrisyllabic word with three shorts (υ υ | υ —). This is noteworthy in particular because of the emotional tenor at this point of the *rhesis*. The line, which translates “Then she (the old servant) sent forth a huge wail (κωκυτόν from the following line) as the horrid successor of her ululation,” provides a metrical mimicry of the action. Not only the action of ululating, but the intensity of the messenger’s story is heightened, excited, and one can sense in the rhythm of this line the agitated state of the speaker. It is worth noting that Euripides flanks this line with a perfectly fulfilled trimeter (1175) and a strong caesura in 1177, which readies us for the next segment of events. One can feel that the actor delivering the line may well be short of breath by the time 1176 rolls around (particularly given the high concentration of perfectly fulfilled trimeters (4) between 1170 and 1175), and it is at the caesura of 1177 that he finally catches his breath and composure.

Similarly, line 1205 provides an extraordinarily heavy, all but spondaic line, by which Euripides also fuses content and form for an oppressive effect. The king just now enters the room where his daughter has met her gory end. The previous line explains that Creon was not aware of the disaster (at least not its scope), and “suddenly he burst into the room and collapsed onto the dead body”:

```
ἀφνω παρελθὼν δῶµα προσπίνει νεκρῷ.
```

— — υ — | — — — — | — — — — |

The sadness in Creon’s recognition of his daughter and her fate is both moving and inescapable. Euripides raises the level of sorrow and lament through sound symbolism.
Laden with O-sounds, this line places Creon’s moans not only in the actor’s mouth but also in front of our faces.\(^{50}\)

Such concerns as line 1205 and line 1176 beg certain questions about the ancients’ casting of roles. Euripides would surely have wanted a major talent to fill the role of his Medea, but great responsibility clearly rests on the actor who sings the Messenger-\*Rhesis*. In Julia Caverno’s estimation, “the messenger is not a supernumerary but a star” (236). At this point in the tragedy, Medea shares the stage with the Messenger; his exit is unclear in the Greek, but his gnomic conclusion\(^{51}\) and the fact that he is no longer referred to after his speech, would suggest a hasty departure. Aside from the Chorus and Medea, no other character returns to the stage until Jason enters at 1293. The actor who plays Jason could, feasibly, play the messenger, too.

The need to have an impressive actor take the role of messenger was important to Euripides for another reason, as well. The messenger in Euripides served to communicate both events and emotion in the tragedy, and this has been understood even from Annenskii’s time. In 1889, Johannes Rassow writes: “\(\text{nam nuntios ab Euripide ubique valde commoto animo narrantes inductos esse videmus idque iam ea de causa mirari non possimus, quia eis rebus, quas narrari iubet, Euripides commoveri vult spectatorum animos}\)” (“for we see that the messengers introduced by Euripides narrate...”)

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\(^{50}\) To clarify this claim, here is a transliterated rendering of the line: \(\text{afnō parethōn dōma prospitnei nekrō,}\) Note not only the prevalence of the O-sound, but also that all but one of the Os is an omega; this is appropriate given that all of the O-sounds in the line are also metrically long. As noted above, this is an oppressively long line on its own, but the overriding vocal quality of the line adds a great deal more emotion.

\(^{51}\) On these concluding remarks of the messenger, it should be said that the audience would be rapt and these words about mortals and the vanity of happiness would not have fallen on deaf ears. Mary Lefkowitz argues that “as a dramatist, Euripides’ purpose is to describe ancient myth in realistic and vivid terms; and his lesson, if anything, as in other Greek religious ritual, is to do honour to the gods and, in the process, to remind men of their mortal limitations” (110). The final statements of this Messenger-\*Rhesis*, though not cited in Lefkowitz’ essay, certainly support her position.
everywhere with an intensely worked up spirit, and we cannot still at it on account of this reason, because with these stories, which he requires to be narrated, Euripides desires that the spirits of the spectators be moved/agitated.”) (Rassow, 34). Further, Rassow also notes that in Euripides, this vivid speech was all the messenger could do, which, in its lack of role outside of its specific function, imparts further responsibility on the speech: “nam in conscribendis his narrationibus Euripidem putasse id potissimum sibi elaborandum esse videmus, ut nuntio omnino nil agendum esset, narrare tantum liceret” (“for we see that, in writing these narratives, Euripides thought that it [the story of the speech] had to be chiefly elaborated by him [the messenger], with the result that in general nothing could be accomplished by the messenger, only that he is able to tell the story”) (17). The messenger, clearly, is of utmost importance to the Euripidean tragedy.

By considering, even briefly, the casting decisions involved in the messenger character, it should be clear that the speech itself is of grand importance to the whole play. If we understand the messenger speech in tragedy as an epic poem in miniature, then it is performing double (if not triple+) duty. As a vestige of epic, the Messenger-Rhesis provides the translator with an important opportunity to explore themes textually and to cut teeth artistically, and which add to the feminist bent of Annenskii’s translation.

How does one translate this rhesis, preserving both its art and its sense? To examine this question a propos of Annenskii’s translation, we will consider the same passages above (those of particular weight and lightness). Following an analysis of Annenskii’s response to Euripides’ use of meter in lines 1176 and 1205, we will consider what other decisions Annenskii made in translating the messenger-speech, specifically his translation of Jason and Glauce’s relationship and the princess’ immaturity, which
function in Annenskii to continue his representation of Medea as the ultimate victim (namely over those whom she victimizes).

As regards the hyper-light 1176, Annenskii does not do anything particularly interesting. There is no indication, metrically, of heightened emotion or tension until the perfectly fulfilled pentameter of 1178 (in Annenskii’s text):

Одна к отцу, другая к мужу с вестью

/ u / u / u / u / u /

One (of the slave-women) ran to the father, another to the husband, with news (of the disaster)

In addition to being a perfectly fulfilled pentameter, allowing it to course across the page and lips, it also repeats the “oo”/“ju” sound five times (two of which are stressed)—this is not quite an ululation, especially since the unstressed vowel in Russian is not much noticed, but the sounds strike the ear as doleful. Russian’s sesquipedalian nature allows for the creation of lines with few stresses. Although only two of these “oo”/“ju” sounds are stressed, the line, in order to perfectly fulfill the pentameter, is full of relatively short words. The diction thus releases an almost staccato effect, raising the emotional tenor of the line. This shaky-voiced pentameter taken with the repetition of the “oo”/“ju” sound create the same chaos on the page that is taking place in the palace. What also interests us in this line is that Annenskii has postponed the excitement. In Euripides, the messenger’s excitement peaks when describing the sudden, frightened wail of the servant-woman (replacing her original religious outburst); in Annenskii, it comes after the realization that evil is afoot. The panic inspired by the realization becomes more dramatic.
What, then, of the weighty 1205, with its lone light element? Annenskii renders this part of the speech over several lines (this is not special; we cannot, of course, expect line-for-line matching) thus:

...Ничего
Не знал отец, когда входил, и сразу
Увидел труп. Рыдая, он упал
На мертвую, и обнял, и целует

The father knew nothing of all this when he entered, and at once he spotted the corpse. Sobbing, he fell on the dead body, and he hugs and kisses (his child)

Here, Annenskii does recreate Euripides’ interesting use of meter. With a strong caesura ( || ) in line 1203, the weight of Euripides’ line is recalled. The natural pause at the caesura emphasizes both the action and the emotion of the line. What might trot along in text-book iambic pentameter fashion is cut, and in the space between “trup” (corpse) and “Rydaia” (sobbing), which are semantically associated to begin with, the reader has a moment to contemplate how things will go for the ignorant father, who, as revealed in the next line, will delicately (there are 8 unstressed syllables in the next line) hug and kiss his corpse-daughter.

In addition to a certain sensitivity to Euripides’ versification, Innokentii Annenskii adapts the Messenger-

Rhesis to his sympathy for Medea, as well. Euripides’ lines 1151-1155, and the following, subtle characterization of Glauc as an immature and selfish girl, find an interesting expression in Annenskii’s Russian. After she
disrespectfully refuses to look at Jason’s children (they are, after all, Medea’s, too), Jason scolds the princess:

Οὐ μὴ δυσμενής ἐσῃ φίλοις,
παύσῃ δὲ θυμῶν καὶ πάλιν στρέψεις κάρα,
φίλους νομίζοντοι οὔσπερ ἂν πόσις σέθεν,
δέξῃ δὲ δώρα καὶ παραιτήσῃ πατρός
φυγάς ἀφεῖναι παισὶ τοῖσδ’ ἐμὴν χάριν;

You are not to be hostile toward my loved ones; stay your anger and turn back your head, deeming as loved ones those whom your husband would so deem; and accept the gifts, and beg your father to release the banishment on these (here) children, for my sake?

…"О, ты не будешь злой
С моими близкими, покинь свой гнев
И посмотри на них; одни и те же
У нас друзья, не правда ли? Дары
Прияй от них, ты у отца попросишь
Освободить их от изгнанья; я
Того хочу".

“Oh, you will not be nasty with my nearest and dearest, contain your anger and look upon them; we have the very same friends, don’t we? Accepting gifts from them, you will ask your father to excuse them from exile; I want this.”

In his commentary to the Medea, Mastronarde explains that

Οὐ μὴ introducing a question with the fut. ind. ἐσῃ is equivalent to a prohibition, and after ἀλλὰ or δὲ (as here)
οὐ alone is carried forward to the following futures…making them equivalent to positive commands…Imperatival questions of this form often express shock, exasperation or peremptory superiority…

(354)

Thus, in the Greek, we have a Jason who understands his position as master, even in his father-in-law’s house, over his wife. He exercises his authority, too, in such a way that recalls the nurse’s speech, and her conviction that a wife may find security in obedience.
Annenskii preserves this assertion of authority, but Jason’s comments quickly dissolve into typical marital bickering. His fed-up tone in confirming their friendships is only further weakened by saying, “I want this.” Concluding his request that Glauce be fond of his sons and extracting a favor out of Creon with the pathetic “Togo khochu” (“I want this”) effectively negates his strong use of the future aspect of the perfective verb in poprosish’ (“you will ask”). Annenskii thus reduces this scene to one of pointless arguing. The effect of this in Annenskii’s translation is more sympathy for Medea, who has lost her hero-husband, an Argonaut, so that he could marry into a very banal, even modern relationship.

But perhaps such behavior is to be expected when married to a Glauce. Euripides suggests her immaturity in lines 1156-1160:

\[
\text{ἡ δ’, ὡς ἔσείσθε κόσμον, οὐκ ἴνέσχετο,}
\text{ἀλλ’ ήνες’ ἀνδρὶ πάντα, καὶ πρὶν ἐκ δόμων}
\text{μακρὰν ἀπεῖναι πατέρα καὶ παιδὸς σέθεν}
\text{λαβοῦσα πέπλους ποικίλους ἡμπεσχετο,}
\text{χρυσὸν τε θείσα στέφανον ἀμφὶ βοστρύχοις}
\]

And she, as soon as she saw the adornments, could not hold back, but she promised everything to her husband, and, before your children and their father left far from the house, having taken the brodered [also means “cunning”] robes, she put them on, placing the gold crown around her curls

And Annenskii:

Царевна же, увидев
В руках детей убор, без дальнюх слов
Все обещала мужу. А едва
Ясон детей увел, она расшибий
Набросила уж пеплос и, волну
Волос златой прижавши диадемой

The princess, on her part, having laid eyes on the raiment in the hands of the children, without wasting
words, agreed with her husband in all of this. Scarcely had Jason carried the children off (homeward), she picked up the embroidered robe, and, having pinned the gold crown to a wave of her hair…

Anneneskii emphasizes the princess’ immaturity both with the phrase “bez dal’nikh slov” (“without wasting words”), and by his word-choice in rasshityi (“embroidered”). The parenthetical “without wasting words” brings to the fore what Euripides leaves in the background: she is impulsive and facile; she’s a girl, not a woman of cunning and thought like Medea. The “rasshityi,” for the Greek word ποικίλους is, on the one hand, expected; on the other hand, the Greek word has a double meaning, suggesting both embroidered and cunning. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, of course, for Annenskii to preserve this double-meaning, but his choice matters: he chose an “embroidered” robe, not a “cunning” one, which has a double effect for our concerns. First, if the robe is not a sly one, but rather embroidered, the focus is on the beauty of the raiment. This is not a minor point, for the materialistic princess is less pitiable in Annenskii, whereas in Euripides she can be seen as a victim of Medea’s sorcery. Additionally, downplaying the malice that Euripides weaves into the robe, Annenskii scales back Medea’s villainy here. It is not the case that readers forget who sent the poisonous gift, but in Annenskii, Medea’s hand seems a bit less prominent. The sympathies generated from one text over another, of course, highlight the interpretive quality of a translation that this dissertation has been underlining—how a translator handles certain nuances can shift the reception of a text in its target language. In this case, as we have seen repeatedly already, Annenskii makes various small linguistic
moves that deflect our revulsion at the infanticidal—homicidal!—witch. This deflection is but one more brick in Annenskii’s feminist, avant-garde wall.

While it could be argued that portraying Glauce as the vapid, materialistic “other woman” runs counter to his larger project of creating a feminist translation, upon closer examination this objection does not hold water. First, Glauce is immature due to her station and her age; Annenskii does not use her to comment on women in some general way. She is young and she is spoiled—spoiled because she has been raised in a palace and does not understand life in the way that Medea does. We could, in fact, argue that, as a protected princess, Glauce reveals the stunted growth that often accompanies the traditional treatment of women. Let us not forget Mary Wollstonecraft’s powerful spaniel analogy:

For though moralists have agreed that the tenor of life seems to prove that man is prepared by various circumstances for a future state, they constantly concur in advising woman only to provide for the present. Gentleness, docility, and a spaniel-like affection are, on this ground, consistently recommended as the cardinal virtues of the sex. (103)

Indeed, perhaps if Glauce were not, too, a victim of a patriarchal system, her portrayal would have been deeper than what we have, and what Wollstonecraft decried as a woman’s “slavish dependence” (79) would have been spared her. But again, Glauce’s characterization is more complicated than that of a facile girl. She has a lot of growing up to do. Immaturity is not a gender issue, of course, and so while it is not Glauce’s fault that she has not had to mature in the way that Medea has (motherhood, exile, and, basically, a pending divorce), Annenskii uses the natural contrast between the two characters to emphasize Medea’s suffering. Although he does not use Glauce as a way to
generalize about women, he does see Medea as a type, and wants to examine her injustice on its micro (Jason, ancient Greece) and macro (gender relations diachronically) scales because her treatment mythically and historically has exacerbated the view of women generally.

The First Stasimon

With this issue of reception and sympathy for Medea in mind, we turn to the Choral Ode, which is fertile earth for Annenskii’s concern for feminine agency as a central trope in the text. As will be shown below, Annenskii handles his chorus with finesse, and attention to the finer aspects of the Greek original. To analyze a translation of a Greek tragedy, it is necessary to consider the handling of a choral ode: not only does the chorus present the audience and translator with a shift in style (meter, dialect, mode), but also in tone and content. Our attention will train on the first stasimon of the Medea (410-445). This is not only a challenging passage on its own (the meter is complicated, it contains epic vocabulary (e.g., ἁγήτωρ “lord/leader”), a hapaxlegomenon, an instance of metathesis, and one must supply not only some missing verbs but also other elements of sentence structure that are missing), but in terms of its meter, its themes, and its placement, the first stasimon forces the poetic translator into making choices that might be at the cost of fidelity to the text. And, of course, critics have often viewed this choral ode as perhaps feminist. The first stasimon runs thus:

στρ. 410-11 Χο. ἄνω ποταμῶν ἱερῶν χωροῦσι παγαί,
καὶ δίκα καὶ πάντα πάλιν στρέφεται
ἀνδράσι μὲν δόλιαι βουλαί, θεῶν δ’

My translation of the Greek has been broken up (“stanza-ized”) to show the change from strophe to antistrophe, strophe II to antistrophe II; I did not simply write these changes in the translation because they do not appear in the Greek, as they will appear in the Russian below.
οὐκέτι πίστις ἀραρεν.
τὰν δ’ ἐμὰν εὐκλείαν ἐχειν βιοτὰν στρέψουσι
φάμαι·
ἐρχεται τιμὰ γυναίκειῳ γένει·
οὐκέτι δυσκέλαδος φάμα γυναῖκας ἔξει.

αντ. 421-2
μοῦσαι δὲ παλαιγενέων λῆξουσ’ ἀοιδὸν
tὰν ἐμὰν ὑμνεῦσαι ἀπιστοσύναν.
οὗ γὰρ ἐν ἄμετέραι γνώμαι λύρας
ὄπασε θέσπιν ἀοιδὰν

στρ. σὺ δ’ ἐκ μὲν οίκων πατρίων ἐπλευσας
μαινομένα κραδία, διδύμους ὀρίσασα Πόντου
πέτρας· ἐπὶ δὲ ἐξέ

ναίεις χθονὶ, τὰς ἀνάν-

δρον κοίτας ὀλέσασα λέκ-

τρον, τάλαινα, φυγὰς δὲ χώ-


ῥας ἄτιμος ἔλαυνῃ.

αντ. 440-1
βέβακε δ’ ὄρκων χάρις, οὖδ’ ἐτ’ αιδὼς
Εὐλάδι τῇ μεγάλᾳ μένει, αἰθερία δ’ ἀνέπτα.


σοὶ δ’ οὔτε πατρὸς δόμοι,

δύστανε, μεθορμίσα-

σθαι μόχθον πάρα, σῶν τε λέκ-


σον δόμοισιν ἐπέστα.

Chorus:
The waters flow up the holy rivers (i.e. upstream), both justice and the universe (πάντα) have turned back on themselves; men’s plans are tricks, and the honesty of the gods is no longer stable; and on the other hand, but common report will turn my life around so that it has good fame; honor will be held by the race of women; no longer will discordant rumor grip women.

The muses of old will cease from their songs, when they sing my (= our = γυναῖκων) faithlessness. For Phoebus, the lord of melody, has not instilled the inspired song of his lyre in our minds; since I would have sung a hymn in opposition to the race of males. A long lifetime has many things to say about our fate, and the fate of men, too.
But you, with a maddened heart, sailed from your father’s house, having passed between the twin rocks of the (Euxine) Sea; you dwell in a foreign land, having lost the bed of your husband-less marriage-tie, wretched woman, you are being driven, a dishonored exile, from this land.

The grace of oaths is dead and gone, and respect does not still remain in the expanse of great Hellas, but it has flown upwards to the skies. Your father’s house is not available for you, miserable one, to seek refuge (in) from your toils, and another royal-woman, a master of your marriage-bed, has usurped the house (i.e., your place in your house).

**ПЕРВЫЙ МУЗЫКАЛЬНЫЙ АНТРАКТ**

**Хор**

**Строфа I**

410 Реки священные вспять потекли,  
Правда осталась, но та ли?  
Горды высси коснулись земли,  
Имя богов попирая в пыли,  
Мужи коварными стали...

415 Верно, и наша худая молва  
Тоже хвалой обратится,  
И полетят золотые слова  
Женам в усладу, что птица.

**Антистрофа I**

Музы не будут мелодий венчать  
Скорбью о женском коварстве...  
Только бы с губ моих эту печать,  
Только б и женской цевнице звучать  
В розовом Фебовом царстве...

420 О, для чего осудил Мусагет  
В свитке скопилось за тысячи лет  
Мало ли правды о муже?

**Строфа II**

425 О, бурное сердце менады!  
Из отчего дома, жена,  
Должно быть, пробив Симплегады,  
Несла тебя злая волна.  
Ты здесь на чужбине одна,  
Муж отдал тебя на терзанье;
И срам и несчастье должна
Влакить за собой ты в изгнанье.

Антистрофа II
Священная клятва в пыли,
Коварству нет больше предела,
Стыдливость и та улетела
На небо из славной земли.

От бури спасти не могли
Отцовские стрелы Медеи,
И руки царя увлекли
Объятий ее горячее.

First Musical Entre-act

Chorus

Стропе I
The sacred rivers have begun to flow backwards, Truth
remained, but did it really? The lands have reached proud
summits, trampling the name of the gods into the dust, men
have become insidious…
   Our poor reputation, perhaps, also will revert to
   praise, and in delight, words golden to women will
   fly, like a bird.

Антиструпо I
The muses will not crown with sorrow a song about
women’s insidiousness…If only we could sound the
women’s pipe in Phoebus’ rosy realm…
   Oh, why did Apollo (Musaget) condemn us to hear
   the same song? Does a little truth about man, over a
   thousand years, amass in the scrolls?

Стропе II
Oh, stormy heart of a maenad! Having pierced through the
Symplagades, O woman, an evil wave must have carried
you from your fatherly home.
   You are alone here in a foreign land, you husband
   has given you over to torture; you must drag, along
   with yourself, both your shame and your misery into
   exile.
Antistrophe II
A sacred oath is in the dirt, there is no more limit to insidiousness, and shame too has flown away from the glorious earth to the sky/Heaven.
Medea’s father’s arrows could not save her from the storm, and the hands of her lord have enticed more passionate embraces than hers.

Euripides’ first stasimon is of a very complex metrical scheme, mixing dactylo-epitrites and aeolics. A full metrical analysis of this choral ode appears in the appendix, and the reader is referred to Mastronarde’s commentary for a full metrical discussion of other aspects of the Euripidean chorus. We shall focus the effect of this meter. The first two stanzas of the first stasimon are dactylo-epitritic, which mix dactyls with iambics. This choral ode is interesting and interpretively valuable for our project because although Jason is the “hero” in the larger mythic economy here, it is Medea who usurps him claims her own heroism. Other scholars (e.g., Bongie (1977) and Flory (1978)) have made the case that Euripides makes Medea a Homeric hero in language and deeds, but this recasting of the foreign witch qua hero is not only evident at the metrical level, but also in its content, which portends a time when gender roles will be reversed and women will assert their place as leaders. Such interpretive issues are obviously significant to Annenskii’s feminist, avant-garde translation.

This ode, which Conacher has termed “one for feminists,” may, therefore, be one for Annenskii, as well: we may repeat Gitin’s words that “the feminine atmosphere of the house [while growing up] affected him [Annenskii] deeply, for his writings show an attentive and compassionate attitude toward the fate of women” (35). What is the fate of women according to this choral ode? Ostensibly, it would appear that women will get the upper hand in the world, rewrite the myths of heroes, and clear their reputation of its
tarnish, “[introducing] the possibility of a remedial, feminine discourse that will counteract the traditional invective against women” (McClure, 388). This, however, can happen, based on the words of the chorus, only in a world where the natural order has been disrupted: rivers flow upstream and the universe is upside down. But, alas, perhaps on a third examination, Euripides is not so pessimistic about women coming into their own. Deborah Boedecker has convincingly argued, in her “Euripides’ Medea and the Vanity of Logoi,” that throughout the tragedy, Medea (Euripides?) rewrites not only her own fate and mythology, but the fate and mythology of Jason also. Of the first stasimon she remarks:

As if taking their cue from the protagonist [Medea], the women of the Chorus also come to criticize received opinion. After Medea determines to exact justice from her betrayer, they sing of how the whole world is turned around, now that a man has proved unfaithful…In this ode the Chorus looks forward to new song…which will bring honor to women instead of their traditional reputation for unfaithfulness. They even attribute this reputation to the fact that singers have always been men…But all this may change: ‘A long age has many things to say about my nature and that of men.’ (102)

The continually evolving discourse of fate reclamation that runs through the Medea, and how Annenskii represents this throughout his translation, particularly in the face of his zealous alliance with Medea, plays out in his translation of the first stasimon. More on this in a moment.

Here, we must address how Annenskii formally translates the chorus’ song, particularly given his self-professed goal in his introduction to the Phoinessiae:

Shying away from a literal rendering, so different from a real exactness, I tried however in my translation not to omit a single shade of meaning which I understood and noticed, but most of all, of course, I sought to preserve at
least a weak reflection of the poetical individuality of Euripides, as I imagined it myself, at least a shadow of that individual blend, unique in its kind, of tenacious sophistry and scorching pathos. (qtd. in Setchkarev, 152)

That is, how can Annenskii’s Russian capture so much of the Greek when he faces so many challenges? The chorus of a Greek tragedy shifts from the Attic to the Doric dialect; it communicates heightened emotion and thematic play both in its meter and its language. In a deft move, Annenskii shifts his meter to one based on dactyls with a rhyme scheme that delivers the quality of a chant (the reader will remember that Annenskii does not use rhyme in the rest of the play). The first strophe scans thus:

```
/ u u | / u u | / u u | /
/ u u | / u u | / u
/ u u | / u u | / u u | /
/ u u | / u u | / u u | /
/ u u | / u u | / u
/ u u | / u u | / u u | /
/ u u | / u u | / u
/ u u | / u u | / u u | /
/ u u | / u u | / u
```

And the rhyme scheme:

```
a B a B c D c D
```

The pattern of the dactyls is unfailingly consistent in the first strophe, and when mixed with the rhyme, which is also repetitive, the effect of a chant cannot be missed. Such a monotonous rhythm cannot, of course, be as expressive as the Greek in its variations, but Annenskii does capture the epic signified; further, given our lack of understanding about what kind of music or exactly what dancing may have taken place with the chorus on the Greek stage, Annenskii has to create some kind of song-and-dance expression, which is here achieved. This may not be poetry that one naturally would dance to, but it is appropriate for the solemnity of the spectacle, if not the emotion of the content.
We should here note what else is going on in this dactylic strophe, particularly the first stanza, which adds an appropriate chant-like quality to the Choral Ode in Annenskii, and, more brilliantly, perhaps sneaks in the translator’s lament for a more equal sexual politics. The first five lines repeat the terminal syllable “li,” although they do not technically rhyme because of the stressed and unstressed alternation. All the rhymed, or stressed, vowels in the stanza are either “i” or “a”; this creates a schema that can be rewritten as “i-a-i-a-a / a-i-a-i.” The intoning of this vowel set certainly befits the shift in mood as we move into the Chorus. On a more interesting level, however, we see Annenskii playing with his own command of Greek to slip in a metatextual look at the situation described in the first strophe. The first lines of the strophe delineate a desire for reversal that would right justice for women. This does not come to pass, of course, in an historical way, which Annenskii knew. I posit that it is no accident that his stressed/rhyming vowels in this stanza, then, reenact the Doric αι, which is most often in tragedy doubled to αιαί (aiai), which is an interjection of grief, as though encoded in Annenskii’s stasimon is an “alas!” at the change in fortune women never enjoyed.

The second strophe and antistrophe in Russian are different, however, and must be considered. In Euripides’ choral ode, the second strophe/antistrophe shifts from the difficult dactylo-epitritic metrical system to a metrical system more Aeolic in character (see Appendix). So, while the first strophe in the Greek moves between dactylic and cretic rhythms, the second half of the chorus explodes into aristophanean, telesillean, glyconic, phercratean meters, and sometimes even a combination of these abstruse metrical schemes. Russian, like English, can handle certain meters easily, others more clumsily. And since, as we discussed above, there was no overriding theory of

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53 In other choral odes in the tragedy Euripides also employs Dochmaics, but not in the first choral ode.
translation for the Russian Silver Age belle-littrists, equally “there was no discussion about whether to retain the original meter, merely suggest it, or ignore it. The identification of musicality was left to the judgment of the individual translators” (Kelly 149). This decision is easier with some meters than others. The full scope of Greek choral meters is a thing apart and many of the meters do not translate into Russian or English. J. Michael Walton puts this into some perspective for us: “the lyric meters used in choral odes, or in formal passages such as the kommos, are varied and almost impenetrably intricate. They involve the regular use of [many meters]…with a complexity that would be impossible to replicate in translation, even were it desirable” (106). Annenskii recognizes that to try to duplicate Euripides would be foolhardy, but he needs to do something to indicate the change from first to second strophe/antistrophe. Annenskii, in a move to mirror the change in Euripides’ stasimon, finds a metrical compromise.

In his article, “Translation, Transubstantiation, Joyce: Two Chinese Versions of Ulysses,” Hoi Fung Cheu reminds us that “a translator must alter every word. Nevertheless, he or she also must get as close as possible to the ‘original intention’ of the source material, which is, in its own way, ‘not to alter a single word’” (59). This highlights the inborn contradictions of translating. However, “one could argue that the merit of a translation can be judged by how compromises are negotiated or how closely the translated work resembles its source” (Cheu 59). And so Annenskii’s second strophe and antistrophe switch from consistent dactyls to amphibrachs: given that the target language simply cannot accommodate the Euripidean metrical funhouse, this is a deft move on Annenskii’s part; not only does this change to amphibrachs demonstrate
Annenskii’s goal to preserve the music of the original, but it also highlights the ode’s transition from generalizations and cosmic predictions to Medea’s specific situation, further aligning the translator with the heroine. Goupy notes of Annenskii’s use of the amphibrach, “Annenskij recourt au vers amphibrachique de trois pieds, mètre que, à la dernière syllable atone près, reproduit dans le système syllabotonique la succession de longues et de brèves de l’élément grec” (“Annenkii resorts to the three-footed amphibrach, a meter that, to the final unaccented syllable, reproduces in the syllabotonic system the the same succession of of longs and shorts as in the Greek”) (43).

The interpretive concern and alliance Annenskii has for Medea comes full force in the second strophe and antistrophe, where the Chorus begins to address Medea’s condition directly. We find a distinct reading by Annenskii here; not one that contradicts Euripides, but one that required a good deal of reading between the lines on the part of the translator. For example, in the second strophe, Euripides’ Chorus is a bit distant from Medea, giving a certain clinical explanation of her situation (432-438b):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{σὺ δ’ ἐκ μὲν οἴκων πατρίων ἐπλευσας} \\
\text{μαινομένα κραδία, διδύμους ὀρίσασα Πόντου} \\
\text{πέτρας· ἐπὶ δὲ ἔξενα} \\
\text{ναίεις χθονί, τὰς ἀνὰν-} \\
\text{δρου κοίτας ὀλέσασα λέκ-} \\
\text{τρον, τάλαιαι, φυγὰς δὲ χώ-} \\
\text{ρας ἄτιμος ἐλαύνη.}
\end{align*}
\]

But you, with a maddened heart, sailed from your father’s house, having passed between the twin rocks of the (Euxine) Sea; you dwell in a foreign land, having lost the bed of your husband-less marriage-tie, wretched woman, you are being driven, a dishonored exile, from this land.

It’s a fine recap, certainly, and Medea cannot be understood as anything but a victim. Euripides, further, makes clear to his audience that Medea’s precarious position is three-
fold: she is a stranger in a strange land (only, the strange land is historically hostile to outsiders), she lacks the protection of her erstwhile marriage to a Greek hero, and Creon will exile her from Corinth in a day. In mythic time, of course, questions of citizenship and the protections citizen women enjoyed were non-concerns, but for Euripides’ 5th century viewers, Medea was in a particularly tight spot. She has no guardian; she is a foreigner whom no one wants. Indeed, Euripides uses the adjective ἄτιμος, a word with resonance in Greek legal discourse to suggest specifically “without citizen rights” or “punished with diminution of civic right” (Mastronarde 245 n. 438). But the Chorus does not take too chauvinistic a tone. They recognize that she is unfortunate and they transfer some of the blame to her “maddened heart,” and by extension the gods are implicated in her current state. In the second antistrophe the Chorus castigates Jason, in fact, by drawing attention to his inability to uphold his oaths to Medea. This is the cause of her stateless position in Greece; back in Colchis, she has no refuge because of what she did for Jason and so in Euripides, Medea is the victim of a usurpation made possible by Jason’s disregard for his word (439-445b):

βέβακε δ’ ὄρκων χάρις, οὐδ’ ἔτ’ ἀίδος
Ἐλλάδι τὰ μεγάλα μένει, αἰθερία δ’ ἀνέπτα.
σοὶ δ’ οὐ̈τε πατρὸς δόμοι,
δύστανε, μεθορμίσα-
θαί μόχθων πάρα, σῶν τε λέκ-
τρων ἄλλα βασίλεια κρείς-
σων δόμοισιν ἐπέστα.

The grace of oaths is dead and gone, and respect does not still remain in the expanse of great Hellas, but it has flown upwards to the skies. Your father’s house is not available for you, miserable one, to seek refuge (in) from your toils, and another royal-woman, a master of your marriage-bed, has usurped the house (i.e., your place in your house).
In Annenskii, we see a much more sympathetic rendering of Medea’s position, her fate, and her victimization. But, we also find an anticipatory and empowering rendering that fleshes out the first strophe more fully. For clarity we repeat Annenskii’s second strophe and antistrophe here:

**Строфа II**

О, бурное сердце менады!
Из отчего дома, жена,
Должно быть, пробив Симплегады,
Несла тебя злая волна.

Ты здесь на чужбине одна,
Муж отдал тебя на терзанье;
И срам и несчастье должна
Влакить за собой ты в изгнанье.

**Антистрофа II**

Священная клятва в пыли,
Коварству нет больше предела,
Стыдливость и та улетела
На небо из славной земли.

От бури спасти не могли
Отцовские стрелы Медеи,
И руки царя увлекли
Объятий ее горячее.

**Strophe II**

Oh, stormy heart of a maenad! Having pierced through the Symplagades, O woman, an evil wave carried you from your fatherly home.

You are alone here in a foreign land, you husband has given you over to torture; you must drag, along with yourself, both your shame and your misery into exile.

**Antistrophe II**

A sacred oath is in the dirt, there is no more limit to insidiousness, and shame too has flown away from the glorious earth to the sky/heaven.

Medea’s father’s arrows could not save her from the storm, and the hands of her lord have enticed more passionate embraces than hers.
Whereas in Euripides Medea did some sailing to arrive in Greece, in Annenskii “an evil wave” conveyed her from Colchis. This shows a certain lack of agency and control from the beginning of her narrative that feeds into the fate-reclamation theme of the first stasimon more generally, for she has much to take back. The second strophe in Annenskii is also marked by decidedly more victim language than in the Greek, but it makes of Medea a strong victim who will bear her fate powerfully. To wit, in Annenskii, Jason tortures Medea (psychologically if not physically), and now Medea must rise up to her wretched position and carry her disgrace with her. One pictures her as an Atlas figure, her world and past on her shoulders, as she enters an unknown future.

But it is in Annenskii’s second antistrophe that his feminist reading of the chorus takes true shape. He explains, independent of Euripides, that “Medea’s father’s arrows could not save her from the storm.” In this way, Annenskii reads in Medea that men and men’s arts are powerless here. Furthermore, in this line, Annenskii names Medea. It is clear from Euripides’ language that the Chorus addresses Medea in the second strophe/antistrophe, but using her name here contrasts her with her father, whose weapons could not and cannot help Medea now. She must help herself, of course.

Now, Annenskii does not say that she will save herself through an androgynous self-presentation, as I argue. As other scholars have noted, Medea must reinvent herself as an epic hero in order to survive, a reinvention few female characters in literature have enjoyed. In her “Becoming Medea: Assimilation in Euripides,” Deborah Boedeker concludes:

> By an elaborate process of mutual assimilation, Medea effectively displaces Jason from the saga of which he was hero. Taking so many images and modes of action to herself, she gradually assumes the methods of the natural,
supernatural, and human powers that seemed to prevail over her, until at the end of the tragedy there remains only the composite, immense figure that has now become “Medea,” to Jason’s horror and the amazement of the Chorus. (147)

Looking at Innokentii Annenskii’s translation, then, what we find is a remarkably vanguard reading. Annenski, or, better, classical studies did not have the vocabulary or philological/philosophical tools to come to a conclusion like Boedeker’s, or mine, or Bongie’s, or other modern scholars’, in 1903.

And yet, here is our Russian Symbolist opening a reading, opening a conversation on Medea as a figure striking against patriarchal inequality, showing that the phallocracy cannot shoot arrows out of every predicament, demonstrating that the social pressures of gender and adhering to societal norms of sexual politics are not sustainable. In her analysis of the first stasimon, Anne Burnett explains that,

the whole reversal of nature motif is extremely apt, since a mother is to bring death instead of life to her children, and a woman is to play a man’s part in avenging her own honor…Rivers run uphill, justice stands on its head, men have turned to trickery, and faith no longer links mortals to the gods. (20-1, emphasis mine)

The πίστις (“faith” in Burnett, or “honesty” in my translation) of Euripides is not in Annenskii. Instead, “Imia bogov popiraia v pyli” (“trampling the name of the gods into the dust”) appears. This shows, perhaps, a difference in understanding of the divine between Annenskii and Euripides, but this line in Annenskii is more damning of Jason, and thus the translator chips away more and more at our reluctance to back Medea. Such turns of phrase, of course, do not undo our revulsion at the infanticide, but this isn’t Annenskii’s project. Annenskii, rather, looks to paint Medea as much more than the woman scorned, a reputation that has dogged her for two thousand years. She is a
complex figure, and by representing her as such Annenskii provides a feminist reading of the “wretched woman.”

And this reading is not at odds with Euripides. Euripides’ language is a bit more vague in this regard than Annenskii’s is, but the Greek nevertheless lays the foundation for Annenskii’s and our feminist readings of the tragedy. Ruby Blondell reminds us that we should ignore simple readings of Euripides as a misogynist:

One might expect any representation of a woman who kills her own children to be unequivocally negative. But Euripides…goes beyond such easy judgments to explore the cultural, material and psychological circumstances that might make a person behave in such a way, and even to stir sympathy for his heroine. In doing so he is in accord with an interesting countercurrent in Greek literature, xenophobic and misogynistic as it so often is. (156)

Where does this leave traditional (mis)readings of the Medea? It seems clear that Medea, Euripides, and Annenskii look to challenge the male-dominated monoculture that not only governed the internal and external time of the tragedy, but also Annenskii’s time. Such poetic piercings of the veil of Greek attitudes towards women thus resonate beyond Euripides’ time. In the play’s Russian afterlife, such challenges to prevailing attitudes would continue to have their impact. Annenskii’s feminist approach to his translation, as seen in his rendering of the chorus, the prologue-monologue, and even in the messenger rhesis, highlights how

Medea is an extreme embodiment of what marriage meant for a Greek girl. In a sense, every bride was a stranger in a strange land…But Medea’s situation is exaggerated because she is from a place far beyond the boundaries of the Greek world…And now Medea is to be banished even from her adopted home. Medea’s situation thus takes the Greek woman’s lot to a nightmarish extreme. If she is the patriarchal male’s nightmare, Jason is the dependent woman’s. (Blondell 158)
Apropos of the infanticide, then, is Medea not merely bringing the nightmare home to roost for Jason, for the patriarchy? I am not looking to absolve Medea of her crimes, and neither is Annenskii. But Annenskii’s critical and impressionistic translation clearly argues, as I have in chapter 3, that Medea must be understood more complexly than she typically is. I argued for a reconfiguring of her gender based on Euripides’ manipulation of space, dialogue, and sexual politics; Annenskii finds in Euripides the same raw data and brings his classical training to bear on his poetic sensitivities to reconfigure Medea’s portrayal on the page. But Annenskii did it a century before me.

Vanguard

Innokentii Annenskii was not a feminist in any mid-late 20th century way. He was not marching; he was not theorizing; he was not running for office. He was at his desk, but he was at his desk with a very special noumen: the spirit of Euripides. It is perhaps anachronistic to label Annenskii a feminist given the powerful and important movements that would follow him. But what better label is there for him? He was delineating a poetic statement on the status of women, via Euripides, that was well ahead of its time. The reader will recall that Annenskii’s poetry was also ahead of its time. The problem with being ahead of your time is that you are often ignored, not heard, or misunderstood. Some of Annenskii’s contemporaries understood him and appreciated him; Nikolai Punin, the Russian art critic, suggested already in 1910 that “Annenskii operedil i svoiu shkolu, i svoikh sovremennikov, i dazhe, esli khotite, samogo sebia—v etom skryta ego udivitel’naia zhiznennost’ i do sikh por polnoe ego nepriznanie!” [“Annenskii was ahead of both his poetic school and his contemporaries, and even, if you will, he himself—in
this was hidden his amazing vitality and his obscurity to this point in time”] (10). His presence in his translations must be looked at carefully to help pull him from this obscurity, to help shed light onto the corpus of a man who is a poetic and translational standard bearer.

One thing that stands out about Annenskii’s Euripidean project over, say, his translations from French and German, was its future. That is, most of Annenskii’s translations from modern poetry were done privately, originally made for his friends (Kelly 155). His Euripides was intended for publication. He wanted Russians to read this work. He wanted them to read and love Greek tragedy. It is clear that he also wanted Russians to reflect on the position of women. Innokenti Annenskii accomplishes this task by converging his two public worlds, academics and poetry, but with a healthy dose of his private world and the women who so influenced him.

Annenskii’s poetic legacy has only been carefully considered for the last four or so decades (Torlone 209 n17), and so it is understandable why his translations of Euripides have received minimal attention. But it is a problem for Slavists, for Classicists, for translation scholars, and for literary critics generally, that more work has not been done on his Euripides; this chapter has aimed to help correct this problem.
Conclusion

The old saw that something is always lost in translation bears a certain truth. This dissertation, however, has shown that, at times, something can be gained in translation, specifically an important reading of a source text. Translation, after all, is many things, and chief among them is that translation is a mode of interpretation. The hermeneutic quality of translation should not be overlooked when examining the choices and motivations of a translator. Indeed, how one reads a source text will heavily influence the way that translator carries the text over into the target language. And, as shown here, this act of reading that forms a basis of translational choice also impacts the source text’s afterlife. What this dissertation has demonstrated is that sometimes, in defiance of the Italian pun “tradduttore, traditore,” a translation can ally itself so closely with the original that the translation itself is what brings us to a closer understanding of the source material. In discussing the history of Biblical translation, Robert Wechsler makes the useful observation that “when people speak about translation, they generally focus on its limitations, on what it is incapable of doing, on how it destroys the original, on how poorly its amateur craftsmen do their work” (259). We all accept the necessity of translation, and many of us often discuss the merits of a specific translation—how many times have I recommended a Pevear-Volokhonsky translation?—but who has ever said, “You know, actually, don’t fool with the original; read this translation instead, it’s way better.”? And yet, there are times when it is advisable to read a translation, and not just because one lacks competence in the original language. Valuable interpretive insight can live in a translation. Rather than focusing on translation’s limitations, we ought more to focus on its power.
It took classical studies and literary critics until the late-20th century to finally see Euripides as something more than a misogynist (the playwright was berated for his depiction of women even in his own day!). The critical consensus now is that, operating in a time and place of terrible inequality, Euripides challenged many of the cultural assumptions about women that undergirded democratic Athens. Walton, in 2006, underscored this conclusion while reminding us of the peculiar challenge in translating the Medea:

The translator is faced with a play which either demonstrates attitudes from Euripides’ time which are alien, though no more alien, perhaps than those to be found in Taming of the Shrew or The Merchant of Venice: or it is a play where the playwright at his iconoclastic best is using myth to investigate male attitudes and the nature of family relationships in a manner that still reverberates. The problem is, then, not so far removed from that of Medea, each play reflecting its own time, but uncomfortable for any audience from any period. (138)

Innokentii Annenskii saw Euripides’ interrogation of prevailing attitudes over one hundred years ago. Annenskii did not dissertate about it, but in his translation he highlighted what can only be described as a proto-feminist streak in the Greek tragedian, despite the “sparseness and indeterminacy of information about the [mythic] past” (Mastronarde 70) in the original text. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, this interpretive translation was a direct result of Annenskii’s upbringing, including both his home life and his philological training; his progressive attitude toward women and their treatment historically; and his subjective translation style, as explored by Armelle Goupy and explained by Adrian Wanner.
When Innokentii Annenskii took up his Euripidean project, which spanned most of his professional-poetic life, he was telling us something significant about his poetic approach, his scholarly acumen, and his interest in sharing his Euripides with Russia.

**The Bird’s Eye**

This study has situated Annenskii’s life and work into the context of Russian literature and Euripides’ afterlife. To demonstrate the extent to which Annenskii’s translation was ahead of its time, this dissertation provided an extended analysis of Medea as an androgynous character by using today’s heuristic and philological tools (Chapter 3). This was a necessary step. We can do this today with some effort; Annenskii’s translation was onto such issues already in 1904, long before any critics were looking at Euripides as anything remotely sympathetic to women and certainly before we had the vocabulary to discuss gender-bending, the phallocracy, or similar modalities of reading. In addition, this dissertation has clarified a new mode of reading a translation. Translation can reveal much more than just the elements of a text. Rather, a translation can contribute to a source text’s afterlife, its reception, and its importance. Translation is powerful stuff despite its marginalized status in literary studies.

Chapter 2 examined the educational system of Imperial Russia and the impact its caprice had not only on Innokentii Annenskii but also on classical studies in Russia. The shifting political and ideological strategies that tried so hard to preserve the autocracy played an alarming role in the direction of Classics in tsarist Russia; but in spite of the perverse uses of the Greek and Roman world by such figures as the Ministers Tolstoi and Delianov, Greco-Roman culture would not go away. It never does. As seen throughout
this dissertation and throughout our lives, the Greeks have a way of helping us negotiate the world. In Marianne McDonald’s simple formulation, “Greek tragedy gives us tools for living” (2003, 207).

Chapter 2 also discussed the Silver Age of Russian poetry and Annenskii’s place in it. The larger context within which Annenskii was working is important—the Silver Age was a period of intellectual excitement and poetic prolixity. And so in this era of intellectual and artistic curiosity, as well as historical turbulence (the Russo-Japanese War, the 1905 and 1917 Revolutions), it is no shock that Annenskii wanted to keep up his Euripidean project. Annenskii, no doubt, wanted to provide Russians with a door to Euripides. The Russian belle-lettrist also, though, wanted to give them a door to 5th century Athens, and this, for Annenskii, meant much more than just bringing the Theater of Dionysus to life, more than educating readers on the plots and characters of the great playwright’s tragedies. Annenskii wanted his Russian contemporaries to see the many tricks Euripides had up his sleeve. Annenskii saw in Euripides an early feminist thread that he himself could identify with because he himself felt similarly. Annenskii, as shown, was sensitive to women’s treatment and status; with the Medea he had the opportunity to bring these issues to a large readership in a simultaneously critical and poetic way.

When Annenskii translated Euripides’ Medea, he did something special. Euripides crafted the characters and he made them slippery, complicated, and multi-dimensional; he elaborated a plot that came to define the myth and that ignited centuries of criticism. (One really cannot overlook the infanticide responsibly.) Thus Chapter 4 provided a sustained analysis of the translation to demonstrate that by bringing his
academic and poetic skills to bear on the tragedian, Annenskii did more than carry these characters and plot over into Russian. For Annenskii, Medea transcended her crimes because she was not just a mother who killed her sons. For Annenskii, Medea was the suffering woman *par excellence*. She was a symbol of patriarchy’s victims. And so, as Euripides crafts his play, Annenskii interprets it for Russia. He interprets it for all us and forces us to look at the tragedy from a unique angle. And it cannot be overstated that his translation method, once carefully examined, gives us tools that have utility far beyond his Euripidean project.

We find ourselves here, at the end, with new tools for evaluating huge corpora of literary production. Consider all the major names in literature who have tried their hands at translation. Much work is to be done; it is the hope of this scholar that the dissertation you hold will jumpstart this work.

**Quo Vadimus?**

One of the things that makes Annenskii so hard to assess even a century on is the apparent lack of data. The man published one collection of poetry during his lifetime (*Tikhie pesni* 1904), and two appeared posthumously (*Kiparisovyi larets* 1910; *Posmertnye stikhi* 1923). Numerically, this is a scant contribution, especially compared to such contemporaries as Blok or Ivanov. Scholars have long struggled to make sense of his oeuvre when faced with such a paucity of output. Why have critics consistently failed to mine his enormous body of translation for more data on the man, the poet, the scholar? His Euripides needs serious critical study. Evelyn Bristol has remarked, “Annensky’s reputation rests on his lyric verse. It is all of a piece” (22). This typical position is a
disservice to a man whose contribution to the Silver Age and, as seen here, to the larger
discussion of literary translation, is large, varied, and complex.

To be sure, Annenskii’s translation of the *Medea* is worthy of serious
consideration by Slavists, Classicists, translation theorists and practitioners, and poets.
Annenskii, himself of a feministic persuasion, recognized in Euripides something of a
fellow feminist-poet. Specifically, Annenskii identified and sympathized with Euripides’
description of Medea, the foreign witch who killed her children to exact revenge on her
opportunist husband, Jason. The sympathy that Annenskii so clearly felt for Medea
reveals itself in his translation of the tragedy. We thus find that his reading of Euripides
provides a key to his translation effort and his status as a classical scholar. Indeed, what
Annenskii sees in and carries over from the *Medea* in 1904 is generations ahead of its
time in terms of Euripides reception.

In his translation, Innokentii Annenskii brought his two worlds—poetry and
scholarship—together, resulting in an early feminist reading of Euripides’ *Medea*, a
reading we must term avant-garde. This befits the man whose own poetry was not fully
appreciated until the generation of poets who succeeded him, the Acmeists. Annenskii’s
place in Russian Silver Age poetry has always been difficult to pinpoint.
Contemporaneous with the younger symbolists, he stands apart from them aesthetically
and philosophically. He pre-dates but prefigures Acmeism and thus we find his legacy
difficult to define. He was a poet of the first-degree and, in main, a respected scholar and
pedagogue. With the foundation laid in this dissertation, it is time to reassess his legacy
in a more thorough way to include his translation work as a significant part of his *oeuvre*. 
It is curious that, in the century since his death, we can count on one hand the number of scholars who have taken up in a serious way Innokentii Annenskii’s Euripides translations. This dissertation stands as one of these very few in-depth considerations of Annenskii’s life’s work. Indeed, no other dissertation, monograph, or even journal article has provided so sustained an investigation into Annenskii’s Euripides as this one. And this thesis has only looked at one play.

Something important is gained in Annenskii’s translation of Euripides’ Medea. Granted, nowadays Annenskii’s feminist reading of Euripides blows few minds, and so we must not mistakenly see that as the sole contribution of his work or of this study. It is too late to turn to Annenskii for a new interpretation of Medea as a feminist text because, in 2014, we are far beyond even the avant-garde of 1904 in this respect. Recognizing, however, that Innokentii Annenskii, through his translation, noted and explored Euripides’ feminist dominant, should encourage us to revisit not only Annenskii’s vast translation efforts, but the translation work of other poets, too. It should be clear from this dissertation that embedded in even the seemingly smallest translation choices can be a wealth of information for the literary critic, the historian, or the theorist. Many translated works by many noted poets have gone unstudied.

With its focus on work in original languages and with its interdisciplinary methodologies, Comparative Literature, perhaps more than other disciplines, is in a particularly unique position to lead the charge in a new Translation Studies. Translation Studies do not have to be limited to theorizing about what translation is, nor should they only apply to how to do the dirty work of translation itself. There is a potential for literary and cultural analysis that we have long overlooked, which is to the detriment of
our understanding of many literary lights. In his article “Language and Culture: Two
Similar Symbolic Systems,” Eugene A. Nida explains:

Rarely does a particular feature of a language or a culture occur alone. For languages there are almost always a bundle of features that combine to communicate a message. The most obvious of these features are the paralinguistic ones of voice quality, speed of utterance, loudness, hesitations, and stuttering—all of which carry along an additional message or impede communication…Language and culture often combine in a type of symbiosis. (419, italics mine)

What we Comparatists need to remember is that literature and translation often combine in a type of symbiosis. Translation should not be considered ancillary to a poet’s body of work. Let us borrow from Nida a bit; let us reimagine translation as “para-poetic.”

Doing so will open extraordinary new understandings of huge amounts of literary output.
Appendix: Scanning the Greek Chorus

Scanning the meter of the Greek chorus in tragedy is complex and requires some patience, but the complexity of the meter only highlights the level of artistic achievement represented by a given choral ode. This brief discussion is included to aid the non-specialist in reading the metrical analyses in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Greek meter is quantitative, and thus relies on heavy and light (i.e., “long” and “short”) syllables. Different genres of Greek literature require different metra, and, as discussed in Chapter 4, the basic meter of tragedy is the iambic trimeter. The meter of a Greek chorus, though, is understood as “dactylo-epitritic.” It is important to keep in mind that the dactylo-epitritic meter is a system, not a rhythm-pattern. In other words, the Homeric dactylic hexameter is a consistent and predictable pattern: although there is room for some variation within a line, there are rules governing the number of syllables and placement of certain syllable values, and this governance applies to every hexametric line in Homer’s epics. This is more or less true of the iambic trimeter of tragedy, too. The Greek tragic chorus is a thing apart, and while one frequently finds patterns within the system, the system is not at all a pattern. The dactylo-epitritic system is basically a progression of syllable units that are joined by either a short or a long anceps syllable (the “glue” between the units). Ancipites can occur at the beginning and end of a colon. There are seven common units based on dactylic and cretic rhythms, but the metrical variations allowed in a single choral ode become daunting as tragedians incorporate Aeolics, Dochmaics, and dactylo-epitritics. To simplify this system for our purposes, we focus on the first stasimon of the Medea, in which the first strophe and first antistrophe
are built of dactylo-epitritics, and the second strophe and second antistrophe are built of Aeolics. Other choral odes in the play incorporate Dochmaics, but not the first ode.

As mentioned, there are seven common units that build the dactylo-epitritic system in the first strophe and antistrophe of the Medea. These units are represented by variations on the labels “D” (dactylic) and “E” (cretic), allowing the analysis to be jotted down in a common and reliable shorthand; the anceps syllables are represented as: x.

This shorthand is useful because of the bricolage that is involved in building a single line. Dactylo-epitritic periods can be mounted onto one another either with or without an anceps as “glue.” The units are:

\[
\begin{align*}
D: & \quad \_ u \_ - u u - \\
D^2: & \quad _ u _ - u u - u u - \\
d^1: & \quad _ u _ - \\
d^2: & \quad u u - \\
E: & \quad _ u - x - u - \\
E^2: & \quad _ u - x - u - x - u - \\
e: & \quad _ u - \\
\end{align*}
\]

Playwrights mix and match these dactylo-epitritic elements to create a line of a choral ode. For example, the first three lines of the Medea’s first stasimon scan:

\[
\begin{align*}
x \ D \ x \ d^1 \ (\_ x - u u - u u - x - u u - ) \\
e \ x \ D \ (\_ u - x - u u - u u - ) \\
D \ x \ e \ (\_ u u - u u - x - u - ) \\
\end{align*}
\]

Typically, the parenthetical notes would not be included, and are here to fully elucidate the construction of, and the shorthand for scanning, these lines. Euripides thus builds his
rhythm by creatively combining the various units of dactylic and eretic beats to satisfy his lines. When the poet moves into his second strophe and antistrophe, the issue becomes more complicated, as his metrical scheme switches from strictly dactylo-epitritic to Aeolic. All of the various Aeolic cola have as a core element the double-short choriamb (— u u —). The Aeolic variations and their analyses are:

- glyconic (gl)  \( ^0^0 — u u — u — \)
- hagesichorean (hag)  \( x — u u — u — — \)
- hipponactean  \( ^0^0 — u u — u — — \)
- pherecratean (pher)  \( ^0^0 — u u — — \)
- telesillean  \( x — u u — — \)
- aristophanean (ar)  \( — u u — u — — \)
- reizianum  \( x — u u — x \)

(In the above schema, the “\( ^0^0 \)” symbol indicates that the paired initial element can be — — or — u or u —, but not u u. These symbols and notations are standard, but are easily found in Mastronarde’s introduction to the Medea.)

Thus, the first stasimon of Euripides Medea (lines 410-437) scan thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Scan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>410</td>
<td>x D x d¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>411</td>
<td>e x D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>412</td>
<td>D x e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>413</td>
<td>D x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>414</td>
<td>e x D x d¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>415</td>
<td>E²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D x e ba (ba = bacchic: \( \underline{u} \quad \underline{u} \))

x D x e x

e x D

D x e

D x

e x D x \( d^1 \)

E^2

D x e ba

ia ar (iamb + aristophanean)

ar^3d (aristophanean with triple dactylic extension)

telestillean

telestillean

glyconic

glyconic

pherecratean

ia ar

ar^3d

telestillean

telestillean

glyconic

glyconic

pherecratean
For a metrical analysis of each of the Medea’s choral odes, see Mastronarde.
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Curriculum Vitae
Jason Kent Brooks

EDUCATION
Ph.D., Comparative Literature. The Pennsylvania State University, 2014.
B.A. high honors, Comparative Literature. The University of California, Davis, 2000.

SELECTED TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Lecturer of Classics. The Pennsylvania State University, 2000-Present.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS
“‘Tired with all these, for restful death I cry’: Autoeroticism and Decadence in Shakespeare’s Sonnets 62-75.” Orbis Litterarum, 66:5 (2011), 388-408.

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS
“‘As though in a dark aquarium’: Economies of Space and Enclosure in Khodasevich’s Evropeiskaia noch’.” Society for Comparative Literature & the Arts, Baton Rouge, LA, October 2010.
“‘Mud Not the Fountain that Gave Drink to Thee’?: The Rape of Lucrece and Alexander Pushkin’s Shakespearian Project.” American Comparative Literature Association, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, March 2005.

SELECTED GRANTS AND AWARDS
Brett J. Love Award for Teaching Excellence, Pepperdine University, 2011.
Harry C. Rutledge Prize for Best Graduate Student Essay, Society for Comparative Literature & the Arts, 2003.